The ספר הזהר ZOHAR

PRITZKER EDITION

II

Genesis

Translation and Commentary by

DANIEL C. MATT

ספר הזהר

The

ZOHAR

ספר הזהר

Pritzker Edition

VOLUME TWO

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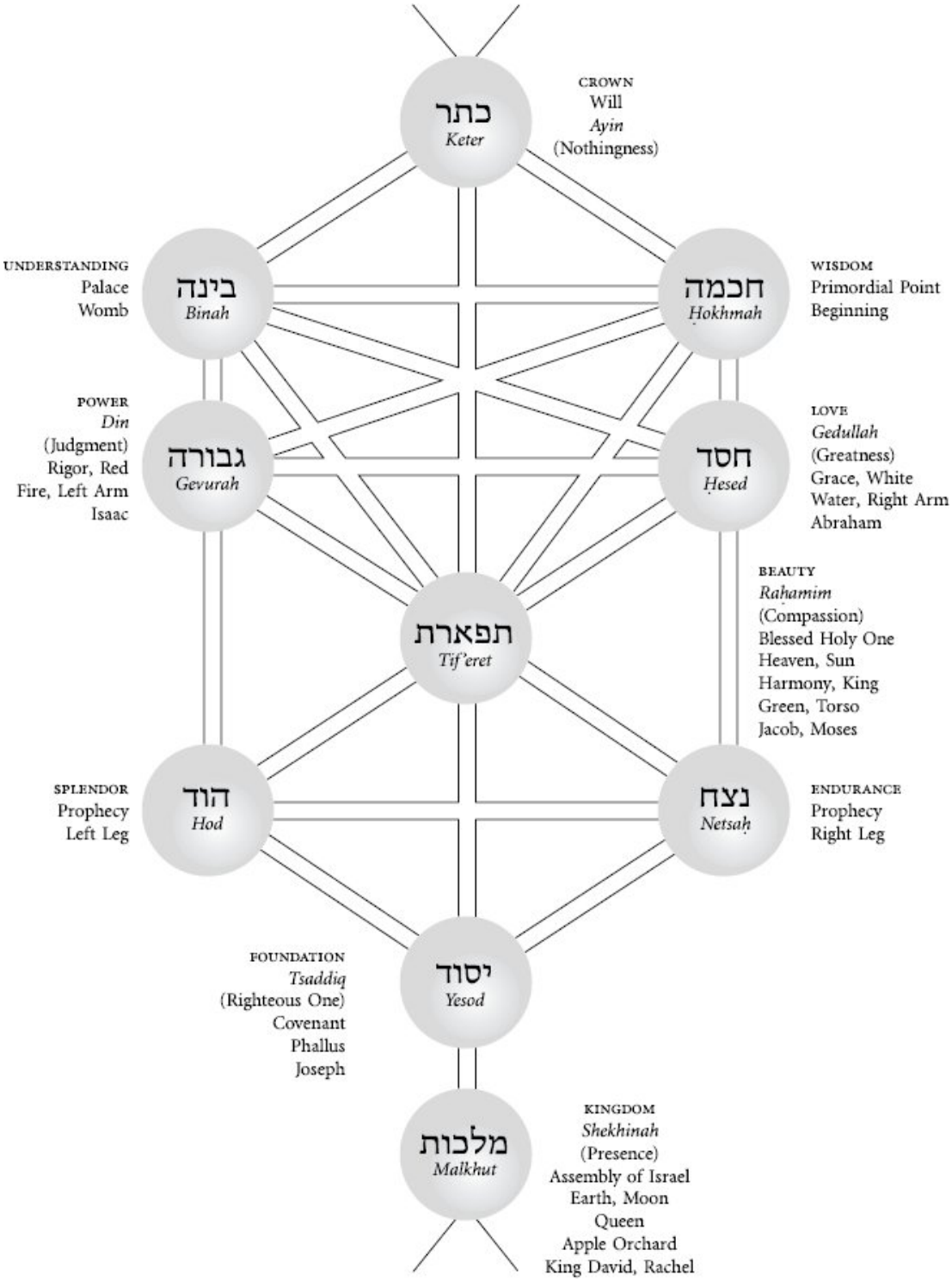

The Ten Sefirot

THE ZOHAR

פרשת לך לך

Parashat Lekh Lekha

“GO YOU FORTH!” (GENESIS 12:1–17:27)

Rabbi Abba opened, “*Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, who are far from* צדקה (*tsedaqah*), *righteousness* (Isaiah 46:12). *Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted.* How hardened are the hearts of sinners, who see the paths and ways of Torah yet do not contemplate them! Their hearts are hardened: not turning back to their Lord,[1] they are called *stubborn-hearted*.[2]

“*Far from righteousness*, for they keep themselves far from Torah.”[3]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, “For they keep themselves far from the blessed Holy One, far away from Him, so they are called *stubborn-hearted. Far from righteousness*, for they refuse to draw near the blessed Holy One, so they are *far from righteousness*.[4] Being *far from righteousness*, they are far from peace, for they have no peace, as is written: *There is no peace, says YHVH, for the wicked* (ibid. 48:22).[5] Why? Because they are *far from righteousness.*

“Come and see: Abraham sought to draw near the blessed Holy One and was drawn near,[6] as is written: *You loved* צדק (*tsedeq*), *righteousness, and hated wickedness* (Psalms 45:8). Because he loved *tsedeq, righteousness*, he was drawn near צדקה (*tsedaqah*), *righteousness*.[7] So it is written: *Abraham, My lover* (Isaiah 41:8). Why *My lover?* Because *you loved righteousness*—love of the blessed Holy

One, whom Abraham loved [77a] more than all his contemporaries, who were *stubborn-hearted* and *far from righteousness*, as has been said."

Rabbi Yose opened, "*How lovely are Your dwellings, YHVH Tseva'ot, O Lord of Hosts!* (Psalms 84:2). How intensely should human beings contemplate the service of the blessed Holy One, for no one knows or reflects upon what the world stands, upon what they themselves stand![8] For when the blessed Holy One created the world, He made the heavens of fire and water commingled as one,[9] but they did not congeal. Afterward they congealed and endured through supernal spirit.[10] Thence He sowed the world to stand upon pillars, those pillars standing only through that spirit.[11] When the spirit disappears they all quiver and tremble, the world quakes, as is written: *Who shakes the earth from her place, and her pillars tremble* (Job 9:6). All stands upon Torah, for when Israel engages in Torah, the world endures and pillars stand firmly in place.[12]

"Come and see: At the moment midnight arouses and the blessed Holy One enters the Garden of Eden to delight with the righteous,[13] all those trees in the garden sing praises before Him, as is written: *Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before YHVH* (1 Chronicles 16:33).[14] A herald proclaims potently: 'You are addressed, holy ones of the Most High,[15] those among you whose ears have been penetrated by spirit to listen, whose eyes are open to see, heart receptive to know!

"'When spirit of all spirits wafts the fragrance of the soul, whence issues voice of voices, potency disseminates in all four directions.[16] One ascends to one side, one descends to the other, one enters between two.[17] Two crown themselves in three, three enter into one.[18] One radiates colors, six on one side, six descending to the other.[19] Six enter twelve, twelve arouse by twenty-two.[20] Six encompassed by ten, ten abides in one.[21]

“‘Woe to those who sleep, slumber in their sockets, unaware, unmindful! Eventually they will arise in judgment, for reckoning is exacted [77b] when the body is defiled[22] and the soul drifts through the atmosphere of the noontime sun, rising and falling, gates unopened, stones whirling from the hollow of a sling.[23] Woe to them! Who will plead for them? They will not arise for this bliss; among the joyful places of the righteous, their place is missing. They are delivered into the hands of Dumah,[24] falling, not rising. Of them is written: *As a cloud fades and vanishes, so whoever goes down to Sheol does not come up* (Job 7:9).’[25]

“At that moment[26] a single flame flares from the side of the North,[27] striking in all four directions. Swooping down, it impacts between the wings of the rooster, rousing him to crow, but no one is aroused, except the truly virtuous who rise and arouse themselves with Torah.[28] Then the blessed Holy One and all the righteous in the Garden of Eden listen to their voices, as is said: *You who dwell in the gardens, companions listen for your voice; let me hear!* (Song of Songs 8:13).”[29]

YHVH said to Abram, [*“Go you forth…!”*] (Genesis 12:1).[30] What is written above? *Haran died in the presence of Terah his father* (ibid. 11:28).[31] What is the point here?[32] The point is that until that day no one had ever died in the lifetime of his father.[33] When Abram was cast into the fire, Haran was killed, on account of which they left.[34]

Come and see what is written: *Terah took Abram his son and Lot son of Haran* [*his grandson and Sarai his daughter-in-law, wife of Abram his son*,] *and they set out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans* [*to go to the land of Canaan*] (ibid., 31). The verse should read: *they set out with him*, for look at what is written: *Terah took!*[35] Why *they set out with them?* Because Terah and Lot set out with Abram

and Sarai, who were the essential ones to leave the wicked.[36] For as soon as Terah saw his son Abram saved from the fire, he came around to fulfilling Abram's desire,[37] so Terah and Lot *set out with them*. As they set out, what is written? *To go to the land of Canaan*. Their desire was to go there.[38] From here we learn: Whoever arouses himself to purity is assisted.[39] Come see it is so, for as soon as he set out *to go to the land of Canaan*, immediately: *YHVH said to Abram, "Go you forth!"* Until he first aroused himself, this is not written.

Come and see: An entity above is not aroused until there is first aroused below that upon which it may abide.[40] Mystery of the matter: Black light is not joined with white light until She is first aroused. Once aroused, white light immediately abides upon Her.[41] Of this is written: אלהים (*Elohim*), *O God, do not be silent; do not be quiet or still, O God!* (Psalms 83:2), so that white light may never be torn from Her.[42] Similarly, *O invokers of YHVH, do not be silent!* (Isaiah 62:6), to arouse below that upon which may abide arousal above.[43] Similarly, once one has aroused arousal, then arousal above is aroused. Come and see: Once it is written: *They set out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans…*,[44] immediately, *YHVH said to Abram*.[45]

YHVH said to Abram, "לך לך (*Lekh lekha*), *Go you forth!"*

Rabbi El'azar said, "*Lekh lekha, Go for yourself*,[46] to refine yourself, to perfect your rung.[47] *Lekh lekha*—you are not to stay here among the wicked.[48] Mystery of the matter: *Lekh lekha* [78a], for the blessed Holy One granted Abraham a spirit of wisdom, so he discovered and tested[49] the conduits of the inhabited world,[50] contemplating them, balancing with the balance[51] till he knew the powers appointed throughout the world.[52]

"When he reached the central point of habitation,[53] he balanced with the balance but failed. He gazed to discover

the power appointed over it but could not attain his desire.[54] After balancing several times, he saw that there the entire world was planted.[55] He gazed, tested, and balanced to know; and he saw that the power over it is immeasurable, deep, and concealed—unlike the dimensions of inhabited rungs.[56] He gazed, balanced, and knew that just as from that central point of habitation the entire world disseminated in all directions, so too from the power presiding over it[57] issued all other powers appointed throughout the world, all linked to it. Then *they set out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan* (Genesis 11:31).

"He again gazed, balanced, and tested to comprehend the clarity of that site, but did not know, could not grasp. Seeing the power of this site, incapable of comprehending it, immediately, *they came as far as Haran and settled there* (ibid.).[58] What was Abraham's reason?[59] He already knew and tested all those rulers conducting the entire inhabited world; he already balanced and tested those who ruled throughout the world, conducting stars and constellations—who overpowered whom.[60] He had succeeded in balancing the entire inhabited world, but when he reached this site[61] he saw an unbearable, impenetrable potency of depths.

"Once the blessed Holy One saw his arousal and desire, He immediately revealed Himself to him, saying: לך לך (*Lekh lekha*), *Go to yourself*, to know yourself, to refine yourself.[62]

"*From your land*[63]—from that habitation to which you clung. *From your birthplace*—from that wisdom through which you envision and gauge your birth, the precise moment you were born, under which star and constellation.[64] *From your father's house*—Do not consider your father's house, whether you are rooted in your father's house to succeed in the world.[65] So, *Lekh lekha, Go you forth!*—from this wisdom, this speculation.

"Come and see it is so, for they had already left Ur of the Chaldeans and were now in Haran. Why would He say

Go you forth from your land, from your birthplace?[66] Because the essence of the matter consists in what has been said.

"To the land that I will show you—I will show you what you could not comprehend and could not know: the power of that land, deep and concealed.

"I will make of you a great nation, [*and I will bless you; I will enhance your name, and you will be a blessing*] (ibid. 12:2).

"I will make of you a great nation, because it is written: *Go you forth!*[67]

"I will bless you, because it is written: *from your land*.

"I will enhance your name, because it is written: *from your birthplace*.

"*You will be a blessing*, because it is written: *from your father's house.*"

Rabbi Shim'on said, "*I will make of you a great nation*, from the right side.[68] *I will bless you*, from the left side.[69] *I will enhance your name*, from the aspect of the middle.[70] *You will be a blessing*, from the aspect of the land of Israel.[71] Here is the throne of four legs, all comprised in Abraham.[72] From here on, blessings to others, nourished from here, as is written: *I will bless those who bless you*, [78b] *and whoever curses you I will curse. Through you all families of the earth will be blessed* (ibid., 3)."

Rabbi El'azar was sitting in the presence of his father, Rabbi Shim'on, together with Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Yitsḥak, and Rabbi Ḥizkiyah.

Rabbi El'azar said, "Concerning what is written—*Go you forth from your land, from your birthplace*—since they all departed on the journey,[73] why was he not told that they all should go? For even though Terah worshiped idols, since he was aroused in fine arousal to leave with Abraham, and we have seen that the blessed Holy One desires the sincere return of sinners,[74] and he had begun the journey, why is it

not written: לכו לכם (*Lekhu lakhem*), *Go you forth?*[75] Why to Abraham alone: לך לך (*Lekh lekha*), *Go you forth?"*[76]

He[77] replied, "If you think that Terah left Ur of the Chaldeans in order to turn back to God,[78] not so! Rather, he left to save himself, for all his fellow countrymen wanted to kill him. As soon as they saw that Abraham was saved,[79] they said to him,[80] 'It was you who deceived us with these idols!' Fearing them, he left. Once they reached Haran, he did not leave, as is written: *Abram went, as YHVH had told him, and Lot went with him* (ibid., 4), whereas Terah is not mentioned."

He opened, saying, "*The wicked are denied their light, and the upraised arm is broken* (Job 38:15). This verse has been established,[81] but: *The wicked are denied their light*—this is Nimrod[82] and his contemporaries, from whom Abraham departed. *And the upraised arm is broken*—this is Nimrod.

"Alternatively, *The wicked are denied their light*—Terah and his household. *Their light*—Abraham. The verse does not read *the light*, but rather *their light*, for he was with them. *And the upraised arm is broken*—Nimrod, who led all the inhabitants of the world astray.[83] Therefore it is written: *Lekh lekha, Go for yourself*[84]—to enlighten yourself and all those issuing from you hereafter."

He opened again, saying, "*Now they do not see light, bright in the heavens, and a wind passes, cleansing them* (ibid. 37:21). *Now they do not see light*. When? At the time the blessed Holy One said to Abraham, *'Go you forth…!'*

"*Bright in the heavens*, for the blessed Holy One sought to join Abraham to that supernal light, to shine there.[85]

"*And a wind passes, cleansing them*, for later Terah and his whole household returned to God, as is written: *and the souls they had made in Haran* (Genesis 12:5),[86] and concerning Terah: *As for you, you will go to your fathers in peace* (ibid. 15:15)."[87]

Abram went, as YHVH had told him (ibid. 12:4).

Rabbi El'azar said, "Come and see! The verse does not read *Abram set out*, but rather וילך (*va-yelekh*), *went*, as is said: לך לך (*Lekh lekha*), *Go you forth!*—for they had previously set out, as is written: *They set out to go to the land of Canaan* (ibid. 11:31). So now it is written: *went*, not *set out*.[88]

"*As YHVH had told him*, assuring him with all those promises.[89]

"*And Lot went with him* (ibid. 12:4), joining him to learn from his actions, though he did not learn so well."[90]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Happy are the righteous who learn the ways of the blessed Holy One so they can walk in them and who fear that Day of Judgment, when one is destined to render account to the blessed Holy One."

He opened, saying, "*By hand every human seals, so each person will know his deeds* (Job 37:7). This verse has been established,[91] but [79a] come and see: On the day when a human's days have been completed, so as to leave the world—that day when the body is broken and the soul is about to depart—permission is granted the human to see what he was not permitted when the body prevailed vigorously.[92] Then three messengers stand over him, enumerating his days, his sins, and all he has done in this world.[93] He acknowledges everything orally, then signs and seals it by hand, as is written: *By hand every human seals*. By his own hand they are all signed, so that he will be judged in that world for first and last, new and ancient, not a single one forgotten, as is written: *so each person will know his deeds*. All those deeds he committed in this world with body and spirit, so he renders an account with body and spirit before leaving the world.[94]

"Come and see: Just as sinners stiffen their necks in this world, so too, even on the verge of departing. So, happy is

the human who learns in this world the ways of the blessed Holy One so that he can walk in them. But the sinner—even though observing the righteous—stiffens his neck and refuses to learn. So the righteous one should grasp him;[95] even though the sinner stiffens his neck, he must not let go but rather grasp his hand, for if he abandons him, then he will go and destroy the world.

"Come and see from Elisha, who rejected Gehazi.[96] Similarly with Abraham:[97] As long as Lot was with him he did not consort with the wicked, but as soon as he parted from him, what is written? *Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan* (Genesis 13:11), and then: *He pitched his tent as far as Sodom* (ibid., 12). What is written next? *The people of Sodom were very wicked sinners against YHVH* (ibid., 13)."[98]

Rabbi Abba said, "Regarding what you said: '*Abram went* (ibid. 12:4), and not: *Abram set out*,' that is fine, but what is written at the end of the verse? *When he set out from Haran*!"[99]

Rabbi El'azar replied, "It is written: *from Haran*, but the setting out was originally from his birthplace.[100]

"*Abram took his wife Sarai* (ibid. 12:5).[101] What does *took* mean? He coaxed her with fine words,[102] for a man is not allowed to take his wife to another country without her consent.[103] Similarly it is said: *Take Aaron* (Numbers 20:25), *Take the Levites* (ibid. 3:45).[104] *Abram took:* he coaxed her with words, showing her how wicked were the ways of their contemporaries. So, *Abram took his wife Sarai*.

"*And his nephew Lot* (Genesis, ibid.). Why did Abraham take Lot along with him? Because he foresaw through Holy Spirit that David was destined to issue from him.[105]

"*And the souls they had made in Haran* (ibid.)—male and female converts whose souls they had refined."[106]

Rabbi Abba said, "Then there must have been so many people, if you say that they all went with him!"

Rabbi El’azar replied, “Yes, and because of all those people accompanying him, they were called [79b] *the people of the God of Abraham* (Psalms 47:10), and he passed through the land without fear, as is written: *Abram passed through the land* (Genesis ibid., 6).”

Rabbi Abba said to him, “If it were written: והנפש (*ve-ha-nefesh*), *and the souls, they had made in Haran*, I would agree, but: ואת הנפש (*ve-et ha-nefesh*), *and the souls*—amplifying the meaning to include the merit of all those souls accompanying him.[107] For whoever leads another to virtue is credited with that virtue, which never departs from him.[108] How do we know? From what is written: *And the souls they had made in Haran*. The merit of all those souls accompanied Abraham.”

לך לך (*Lekh lekha*), *Go you forth!* Rabbi Shim’on said, “Why does the first revelation of the blessed Holy One to Abraham open with לך לך (*Lekh lekha*)? Until now the blessed Holy One did not speak with him. Why did He open with לך לך (*Lekh lekha*)?[109] They have said that by its sum He hinted at a hundred, for at the age of one hundred a son was born to him.[110] But come and see: Whatever the blessed Holy One does on earth is entirely a mystery of wisdom. Since Abraham was not yet fittingly joined to the blessed Holy One, He said to him, ‘לך לך (*Lekh lekha*),’ alluding to that site through which one must approach the blessed Holy One, the first rung for entering the blessed Holy One.[111] Therefore, לך לך (*Lekh lekha*).

“Abraham could not grasp this rung until he entered the land, where he received that rung.[112] Similarly it is written: *David inquired of YHVH, ‘Should I go up to one of the towns of Judah?’ YHVH replied, ‘Go up!’ He asked, ‘Where should I go?’ He replied, ‘To Hebron’* (2 Samuel 2:1). Now, since Saul had already died and kingship was designated for David, why didn’t he receive kingship over all Israel

immediately?[113] It is all a mystery of wisdom, for David could not receive kingship until he joined the patriarchs, who were in Hebron, through whom he could then receive it.[114] So he lingered there for seven years to receive kingship fittingly, all in the mystery of wisdom, so that his kingship would be perfected.[115] Similarly Abraham did not enter the covenant of the blessed Holy One until he entered the land.[116]

"See what is written: ויעבר אברם בארץ (*Va-ya'avor Avram ba-arets*), *Abram passed through the land* (Genesis 12:6).[117] ויעבר (*Va-ya'avor*), *He passed*. The verse should read: וילך (*Va-yelekh*), *He went*. But here is an allusion to the holy name by which the world is sealed with seventy-two engraved letters, all included in this name.[118] Here is written: ויעבר (*Va-ya'avor*), *He passed*, and there is written: יהוה ויעבר (*Va-ya'avor YHVH*), *YHVH passed, before his face and proclaimed* (Exodus 34:6).[119]

"In *The Book of Rav Yeiva Sava:*[120] Here is written: ויעבר (*Va-ya'avor*), *He passed*, and there is written: אני אעביר (*Ani a'avir*), *I will make* (*all My goodness*) *pass* (Exodus 33:19),[121] alluding to the holiness of the land, from a fittingly supernal site.[122]

"*As far as the site of Shechem, as far as the terebinth of Moreh* (Genesis, ibid.), from one side to the other, fittingly.[123]

"*The Canaanite was then in the land* (ibid.). As has been said, until then the evil serpent prevailed, who was cursed and brought curses upon the world, as is written: *Cursed be Canaan, slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers* (ibid. 9:25), and similarly: *Cursed are you among all animals…* (ibid. 3:14).[124] There[125] Abraham drew near the blessed Holy One. What is written? *YHVH appeared to Abram* (ibid. 12:7). Here was revealed to him what he had not known—that profound power ruling the land.[126] So what had been concealed from him *appeared* [80a], and then *he built an altar there to YHVH who had appeared to him* (ibid.). Since

the verse states *to YHVH*, why *who had appeared to him?* Because here was revealed to him that rung ruling over the land, and he entered enduringly.

"*He moved on from there* ההרה (*ha-harah*), *to the mountain* (ibid., 8).[127] There he discovered הר ה׳ (*har he*), Mountain of He,[128] and all those rungs planted there.[129]

"*He spread* אהלה (*oholoh*), *his tent* (ibid.), spelled with a ה (*he*)[130]—spreading a spread, accepting the Kingdom of Heaven with all its linked rungs.[131] Then he knew that the blessed Holy One rules over all, so he built an altar. There were two altars because here it was revealed to him that indeed the blessed Holy One rules over all, and he discovered supernal wisdom, which he had not known before. So he built two altars: one for the revealed rung, one for the concealed.[132] Come see it is so! First is written: *He built an altar there to YHVH who had appeared to him* (ibid., 7), and afterwards simply: *He built an altar there to YHVH* (ibid., 8), without *who had appeared to him*. All a mystery of wisdom!

"Then Abraham was crowned from rung to rung[133] until he ascended to his rung, as is written: *Abram journeyed, continually journeying toward the Negev* (ibid., 9)—the South, share of Abraham.[134] *Continually journeying*, rung upon rung until ascending to the South, where he was fittingly bound, ascending to his rung: the South.

"Once Abraham was crowned with his rungs in the Holy Land and entered the holy rung, what is written? *There was a famine in the land* (ibid., 10), for no one knew how to draw near the blessed Holy One.[135]

"*There was a famine in the land*, for until now the power over the land had not vitalized or nourished the land, for it was still unsanctified, unstable.[136] As soon as Abraham saw that the power appointed over the land had not vitalized it fittingly with holy energy, *Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there* (ibid.). How did Abraham know?

[137] As is written: *To your seed I give this land* (ibid., 7). Then Abraham knew that the land would be arrayed in holy arrayal only through certain rungs issuing from him.[138] He discovered a mystery of wisdom: only so would the land be arrayed in holiness. [81b]

"*Abram went down to Egypt*. Why to Egypt? Because it is equivalent to the Garden of *YHVH*, as is written: *Like the garden of YHVH, like the land of Egypt* (ibid. 13:10).[139] For there one river on the right plunges, as is written: *The name of the first is Pishon, the one winding through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold* (ibid. 2:11).[140] Once Abraham knew and entered perfect faith,[141] he sought to know all those rungs linked below,[142] and since Egypt drew from the right, he went down to Egypt.[143]

"Come and see: Famine prevails only when compassion withdraws from justice."[144]

When he drew near to Egypt (ibid. 12:11).

Rabbi El'azar said, "כאשר הקריב (*Ka'asher hiqriv*), *When he drew* [someone] *near*. The verse should read: כאשר קרב (*Ka'asher qarav*), *When he came near*. Why *ka'asher hiqriv, when he drew* [someone] *near?*[145] As is written, *Pharaoh hiqriv, drew* [someone] *near* (Exodus 14:10), for he drew Israel back to God.[146] Here too, *hiqriv*, for he drew himself near to the blessed Holy One fittingly.

"*To enter Egypt* (Genesis, ibid.)—to scrutinize those rungs[147] and shun them, to shun the ways of the Egyptians."

Rabbi Yehudah said, "Come and see: Because Abraham went down to Egypt without permission, his descendants were enslaved there for four hundred years. For look at what is written: *Abram went down to Egypt*, and not: *Go down to Egypt!*[148] Further, he was troubled all that night over Sarah.[149]

"*He said to his wife Sarai, 'Now I know what a beautiful woman you are!'* (ibid.). Didn't Abraham know she was beautiful before that moment? But they have established

that until that moment he had never gazed at Sarah's features, and when he drew near Egypt she was revealed, so he saw her.[150]

"Alternatively, *Now I know*, for he saw *Shekhinah* accompanying her. So Abraham relied on saying, *'She is my sister'* (ibid., 19). This word ascends in two nuances:[151] one literal,[152] the other as is written: *Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister'* (Proverbs 7:4).[153] Similarly it is written: *Say you are my sister* (Genesis, ibid., 13), and: *You speak with us* (Deuteronomy 5:23).[154]

"*That it may go well with me because of you* (Genesis, ibid.). He said this to *Shekhinah:* 'Because of You the blessed Holy One will treat me well.'

"*And my soul may live thanks to you* (ibid.), for thereby one ascends and attains longevity."[155]

Say you are my sister.

Rabbi Yeisa said, "Abraham knew that all those Egyptians were steeped in lechery.[156] Knowing all this, [82a] why didn't he fear for his wife and turn back without entering? Because he saw *Shekhinah*."[157]

When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw how very beautiful the woman was (ibid., 14).

Rabbi Yehudah said, "He had put her in a chest, which they opened to collect customs. As it was opened, she shone like the radiance of the sun, as is written: *how very beautiful the woman was.*[158] Why *very?* Because they saw another radiance in the chest.[159] They took her out and saw her as before,[160] as is written: *Pharaoh's courtiers saw her* (ibid., 15). Since it is already written: *The Egyptians saw the woman*, why: *Pharaoh's courtiers saw her?* Because they took her out and saw her as before, and then *they praised her to Pharaoh*… (ibid.)."

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, “Woe to the wicked of the world, who do not know or consider the work of the blessed Holy One! They fail to reflect that all that transpires in the world derives from Him, for He knows at first what will be in the end, as is written: *Declaring the end from the beginning* (Isaiah 46:10). He foresees and acts at first to culminate in the future.

“Come and see: If Sarai had not been taken to Pharaoh, then he would not have been struck—and that striking caused a subsequent striking, when the Egyptians were struck with great plagues. Here is written: *great plagues* (Genesis, ibid., 17),[161] and there is written: *YHVH displayed signs and wonders, great and terrible, in Egypt* (Deuteronomy 6:22).[162] Just as there ten plagues, so here ten plagues.[163] Just as the blessed Holy One performed miracles and mighty deeds for Israel by night, so here He performed miracles and mighty deeds for Sarah by night.”

Rabbi Yose opened, “*You, O YHVH, are a shield around me, my glory, who lifts up my head* (Psalms 3:4). David said, ‘Even if everyone on earth wages war against me, *You, O YHVH, are a shield around me*.’ Come and see what is written: *a shield around me*. David said before the blessed Holy One, ‘Master of the world! Why don’t they conclude a blessing with me as they do with Abraham, of whom is written: *I am your shield* (Genesis 15:1), so they say: Shield of Abraham?’[164]

“The blessed Holy One replied, ‘Abraham I have already tried and tested, and he stood erect before Me.’[165]

“David said, ‘If so, *Examine me, O YHVH, and try me, test my reins*[166] *and heart* (Psalms 26:2).’

“When he perpetrated that affair with Bathsheba,[167] he reminded Him of what he had said: *You examined my heart, You visited by night, You tested me and did not find; my plan should not have passed my mouth* (ibid. 17:3). He meant, ‘I said, “*Examine me, O YHVH, and try me,*” and *You examined my heart*. I said, “*Test my reins and heart,*” and *You tested*

me and did not find—You did not find me fitting. *My plan should not have passed my mouth*—If only that word I conceived[168] had never passed my lips.'

"Even so, they do conclude a blessing with him, for they say: Shield of David.[169] So David said, *'You, O YHVH, are a shield around me, my glory*. This rung is my glory with which I am crowned.'"[170]

Pharaoh put men in charge of him, and they escorted him (Genesis 12:20).

Rabbi Yitsḥak opened, "*The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, he will thrive like a cedar in Lebanon* (Psalms 92:13). Why does Scripture compare the righteous to a palm tree? Just as a palm tree, once cut down, takes a long time to rise again, so too the righteous: once one perishes from the world, a long time passes before another arises in his place.[171] Similarly, *he will thrive like a cedar in Lebanon*.

"*The righteous one will flourish like a palm tree*. Just as a palm tree rises only male and female,[172] so too a righteous one arises only male and female.[173]

"*He will thrive like a cedar in Lebanon*. Just as a cedar in Lebanon is supreme above all, all abiding beneath it, so a righteous one is supreme above all, all abiding beneath him. The world stands upon a single righteous one, as is written: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world* (Proverbs 10:25): on him the world stands, through him it is sustained, upon him it is planted."[174]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "But we have learned that the world stands on seven supports, as is written: *She has hewn her seven pillars* (ibid. 9:1)."[175]

Rabbi Yose replied, "Certainly so, but all those others endure through the seventh, [82b] support of the world—Righteous One watering, saturating the world, nourishing all, of whom is written: *Say of the righteous one that he is*

good (Isaiah 3:10), and similarly: *YHVH is good to all, and His compassion is over all His works* (Psalms 145:9).”[176]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, “Look at what is written: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden* (Genesis 2:10)—this support upon which the world stands, who waters the garden, by whom the garden is watered,[177] through whom it generates fruit—all flourishing, flying into the world, sustenance of the world, sustenance of Torah. Who are they? Souls of the righteous—fruit of the handiwork of the blessed Holy One.[178] So every single night souls of the righteous ascend, and at the moment of midnight the blessed Holy One comes to the Garden of Eden to delight with them.”[179]

“With whom?”

Rabbi Yose said, “With all of them, both those whose abode is in that world and those dwelling in their abode in this world.[180] With all of them the blessed Holy One delights at midnight.

“Come and see: The world on high needs the arousal of the world below.[181] When souls of the righteous leave this world, ascending above, they all clothe themselves in supernal light, in a splendid form.[182] The blessed Holy One delights in them, desires them, for they are the fruit of His handiwork. So Israel, possessing holy souls, are called ‘children of the blessed Holy One,’ as is said: *You are children of YHVH your God* (Deuteronomy 14:1)—actual *children*, fruit of His handiwork!”

Rabbi Yeisa said, “Even those on earth? How?”[183]

“He replied, “Because at midnight all the truly virtuous awaken to declaim Torah and proclaim praises of Torah.[184] As has been said, the blessed Holy One and all the righteous in the Garden listen together to their voices, and a thread of grace emanates upon them by day, as is written: *By day YHVH directs His grace, at night His song is with me* (Psalms 42:9).[185] So praises ascending before Him by night compose consummate praise.

“Come and see: When the Israelites were confined in their homes as the blessed Holy One slew the Egyptian firstborn, they sang songs of praise before Him.[186]

“Come and see: King David would rise at midnight.[187] For if he sat or lay in bed, singing songs of praise, how is it written: *At midnight I rise to praise You* (ibid. 119:62). *I rise*, literally, standing to engage in song and praise of Torah. So David is king forever;[188] even in the days of King Messiah he will be king, for we have learned: ‘If King Messiah is of the living, David is his name; if of the dead, David is his name.’[189] He aroused the morning before it appeared, as is written: *Awake, my glory! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken dawn* (ibid. 57:9).

“Come and see: The entire night that Sarah was with Pharaoh, supernal angels came to sing praises to the blessed Holy One. He said to them, ‘Go, all of you! Afflict Egypt with great plagues, prefiguring what I intend to do later.’[190] What is written? *YHVH plagued Pharaoh with great plagues*… (Genesis 12:17).[191]

“Come and see what is written: *Pharaoh called Abram and said to him, ‘What is this you have done* [*to me! Why didn’t you tell me she is your wife?*]’ (ibid., 18). How did he know,[192] since here is not written as with Abimelech: *Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet* (ibid. 20:7)?[193] Here He told him nothing.”

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, “Look at what is written: *Because of Sarai, Abram’s wife* (ibid. 12:17)! This is what they said to him: *‘Because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.’*[194] For He did not converse with him as with Abimelech; rather, this was said and nothing more: ‘This plague is *because of Sarai, Abram’s wife*.’ He did not converse with him.[195] Then he knew that she was Abraham’s wife, and immediately, *Pharaoh called Abram and said*…

“*Pharaoh put men in charge of him* (ibid., 20). Why? So no one would come near to harm them.

"*And they sent him off* (ibid.), escorting him throughout Egypt.[196] The blessed Holy One said to him,[197] 'So you are destined to do to his descendants, escorting them from your land, as is written: *When Pharaoh sent off the people* (Exodus 13:17), escorting them from his whole land."[198]

Rabbi Abba said, "Why did all this happen to Abraham? Why was it necessary? To enhance Abraham and Sarah's name in the world, [83a] for even in Egypt, site of the world's greatest magicians[199]—from whom no one ever escaped—Abraham was glorified, ascending high, as is written: *Abram went up from Egypt* (Genesis 13:1). To where? *To the Negev* (ibid.)."[200]

Rabbi Shim'on said, "Come and see: All is a mystery of wisdom. Here beckons an allusion to wisdom and rungs below, to the depths of which Abraham descended,[201] knowing them but not clinging, returning to vitality. He was not seduced by them like Adam, who upon reaching that rung was seduced by the serpent and inflicted death upon the world.[202] He was not seduced like Noah, for when he [Noah] descended and reached that rung, what is written? *He drank of the wine and became drunk, and exposed himself inside* אהלה (*oholoh*), *his tent* (ibid. 9:21)—spelled with a ה (*he*): *oholah, her tent.*[203]

"But of Abraham, what is written? *Abram went up from Egypt*, ascending, not descending, returning to his domain, the supernal rung he had grasped before.[204] The event transpired to reveal wisdom, for he endured firmly—fittingly—and was not seduced. He rose erect, returning to his domain: *to the Negev*—the South, supernal rung to which he had been linked before, as is written: *continually journeying toward the Negev* (ibid. 12:9). Here too, *to the Negev*, the site he had grasped before.

"Come and see the mystery of the matter: If Abram had not gone down to Egypt and been refined[205] there first, he would not have become the share of the blessed Holy One.[206] Similarly with his children, when the blessed Holy

One wanted to make them a unique and perfect people, to draw them close to Him: If they had not first gone down to Egypt and been refined there, they would not have become His unique nation. Similarly, if the Holy Land had not been given first to Canaan to rule, it would not have become the portion and share of the blessed Holy One.[207] It is all one mystery."

Rabbi Shim'on was walking on the way together with his son Rabbi El'azar, Rabbi Abba, and Rabbi Yehudah. As they were walking, Rabbi Shim'on said, "I am amazed how people of the world do not care to know the words of Torah and the foundation of their existence!"[208]

He opened, saying, "My *soul desires You in the night, the spirit within me seeks You at dawn* (Isaiah 26:9). They have established this verse and so have we,[209] but come and see: When a person climbs into bed, his soul leaves him and ascends on high.[210] Now, if you say that they all ascend, not every one sees the face of the King. Rather, the soul departs, and in the body remains nothing but a trace of a pint of the heart's vitality.[211] The soul proceeds, seeking to ascend, countless rungs upon rungs to climb.[212] Flying, she encounters those hooded, hunchbacked, dazzling demons of defilement.[213] If she is pure, not having been defiled during the day,[214] she ascends; if not, she is defiled among them, clings to them, ascends no higher. There they divulge information to her, and she grasps what is imminent.[215] Sometimes they toy with her, disseminating deceptions.[216] She drifts this way all night long until the person awakes and she returns to her place.[217] Woe to those sinners of the world who defile themselves and their souls!

"Come and see: When those who have not defiled themselves climb into bed, the soul ascends, first entering all those rungs,[218] ascending, not clinging to them. Then she moves on, soaring above on her own path.[219] The soul worthy of ascending appears before the Countenance of

Days,[220] cleaving to the desire to appear in sublime longing, to gaze upon the loveliness of the King and contemplate in His palace.[221] Such a person shares constantly in the world that is coming.[222] Such a soul yearns constantly for the blessed Holy One, yearns for Him while ascending; she does not cling to those other species of dazzling demons, but pursues the holy species—the realm from which she issued.[223] So it is written: *My soul desires You in the night*, pursuing You, not being seduced by another, alien species.

"Come and see: *My soul*, ruling by night, pursuing her rung;[224] *spirit*, by day. As is written: *My soul desires You* [83b] *in the night*—נפש (*nefesh*), soul, ruling by night; *the spirit within me seeks You at dawn*—רוח (*ruaḥ*), spirit, ruling by day.[225] Now, if you say that they are two separate rungs, not so! They are one rung, two joined as one,[226] a supernal one ruling over them, cleaving to them, and they to it, called נשמה (*neshamah*), soul breath.[227] All those rungs culminate in the mystery of wisdom, for by contemplating them one contemplates supernal wisdom.[228] This *neshamah* enters them and they cleave to it,[229] and when it prevails that person is called 'holy,' totally perfect—undivided desire for the blessed Holy One.

"*Nefesh*, soul, is lower arousal—supporting the body, nourishing it.[230] The body fastens on her; she is fastened to the body. Afterward she is arrayed,[231] becoming a throne on which settles *ruaḥ*, spirit,[232] through the arousal of *nefesh* fastened to the body,[233] as is written: *until spirit is poured upon us from on high* (Isaiah 32:15). Once both have been arrayed, they are ready to receive *neshamah*, for *ruaḥ* becomes a throne for *neshamah*. This *neshamah* is concealed, supreme above all, hidden of all hidden. Consequently there is throne upon throne, and a throne for the highest above them.[234] When you contemplate the rungs you discover the mystery of wisdom.[235] All is wisdom, in this way grasping the concealed.

“Come and see: *Nefesh*—lower arousal, cleaving to the body like the light of a candle.[236] The lower light, which is black, cleaves to the wick, never parting from it, arrayed by it alone.[237] Once arrayed by the wick, it becomes a throne for the white light settling upon the black light.[238] When both are arrayed, the white light becomes a throne for a concealed light—invisible, unknowable—settling upon the white light.[239] Then the light is perfect.

“So with the human being who attains total perfection and is then called ‘holy,’ as is said: *For the holy ones on earth, the majestic in whom is all My delight* (Psalms 16:3). Similarly, the supernal mystery.[240]

“Come and see: When Abraham entered the land the blessed Holy One appeared to him, as has been said, for it is written: *to YHVH who had appeared to him* (Genesis 12:7).[241] There he received *nefesh* and built an altar for that rung.[242] Afterward, *continually journeying* (ibid., 9),[243] receiving *ruaḥ*.[244] Finally he ascended to cleave to *neshamah*, and then *he built an altar there to YHVH* (ibid, 8)—uncharacterized, referring to *neshamah*, concealed of all concealed.[245]

“Then he knew he had to be refined and crowned with rungs, so immediately *Abram went down to Egypt* (ibid., 10).[246] He was delivered from there, not seduced by those dazzling demons.[247] Refined, he returned to his domain. Having descended and been refined, immediately *Abram went up from Egypt* (ibid. 13:1)—went up, literally, returning to his domain, cleaving to supernal faith, as is written: *to the Negev*.[248] From now on Abraham knew supernal wisdom, cleaving to the blessed Holy One, becoming the right hand of the world.[249] Then *Abram was very heavily laden with cattle, with silver, and with gold* (ibid., 2). *Very heavily laden*—on the side of the East;[250] *with cattle*—on the side of the West;[251] *with silver*—on the side of the South;[252] *and with gold*—on the side of the North.”[253]

Rabbi El’azar, Rabbi Abba, and all the Companions came and kissed his hands.[254] Rabbi Abba wept and said, “Woe when you depart from the world. Who will radiate the light of Torah? Happy is the share of the Companions who hear words of Torah from your mouth!”

Rabbi Shim’on said, “Come and see what is written: He *went on his journeys* (ibid., 3).[255] *He went on his journeys*—to visit his site, his rungs. למסעיו (*Le-massa’av*), *On his journeys*—spelled למסעו (*le-massa’o*), *on his journey.*[256] Who is *his journey?* The first rung, who appeared to him at first.[257] Here is written: *massa’o, his journey*, and there is written: אבן שלמה מסע (*even shelemah massa*), *stone dressed at the quarry* (1 Kings 6:7),[258] and we have established: אבן שלמה (*even shelomoh*), *stone of Solomon*, indeed![259] Massa, as has been said.[260]

“So, *He went on his journeys*—all those rungs, rung after rung, as has been said.[261]

“*From the Negev* [84a] *as far as Bethel* (Genesis, ibid.), arraying his site, joining them in consummate union, since *from the Negev as far as Bethel* the mystery of wisdom manifests fittingly.[262]

“*To the place where* אהלה (*oholoh*), *his tent*—spelled with a ה (*he*)—*had been at the beginning*. Who is *oholoh? Bethel, stone of Solomon*, as we have said.[263]

“Scripture inscribed again: *To the site of the altar that he had made there at first* (ibid., 4), as is written: *to YHVH who had appeared to him* (ibid. 12:7).[264] Then, *There Abram called out the name of YHVH* (ibid. 13:4),[265] cleaving to perfect faith.[266]

“Come and see: At first he ascended from below to above, as is written: *YHVH appeared to Abram* (ibid. 12:7), and similarly: *to YHVH who had appeared to him*—first rung, as we have said, אבן שלמה מסע (*even shelemah massa*), and it is spelled: למסעו (*le-massa’o*), *on his journey.*[267] Then, *continually journeying toward the Negev* (ibid., 9), rung after rung until he was crowned with the South, his allotted share.[268]

Then when he ascended,[269] Scripture concealed the word: *to YHVH*, uncharacterized—supernal world.[270] From there he journeyed by his rungs, descending from above to below, so all cleaved to its site fittingly.

"Here, when you contemplate the rungs you find the mystery of supernal wisdom. What is written? *He went on his journeys from the Negev,*[271] from the right side, beginning of the supernal world,[272] concealed, deep, above until Infinity,[273] journeying rung after rung, *from the Negev as far as Bethel*, from above to below.[274]

"*There Abram called out the name of YHVH*—joining unity to its site fittingly,[275] as is written: *To the site of the altar that he had made there at first*. Why *that he had made*? Because he had raised Her[276] from below to above, and now he lowered by rungs from above to below, so She would not depart from those supernal rungs and they would not depart from Her and all would unite in single union fittingly. Then Abraham was crowned, becoming the actual share of the blessed Holy One.[277]

"Happy are the righteous who are crowned with the blessed Holy One, as He is crowned with them! Happy are they in this world and happy in the world that is coming! Of them is written: *Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever* (Isaiah 60:21).[278] And similarly: *The path of the righteous is like gleaming light, shining ever brighter until full day* (Proverbs 4:18)."

They went on, and when they reached the site of a certain field they sat down. Rabbi Shim'on opened, saying, "*Turn to me, be gracious to me*…(Psalms 86:16).[279] This verse calls for contemplation, and indeed we have established it in various places,[280] but this verse contains concealed words.

"*Turn to me*. How could David say: *Turn to me, be gracious to me?*[281] He spoke only because of the rung with which he was crowned.[282]

"*Grant Your power to Your servant. Grant Your power*—supernal power,[283] as is written: *He will grant power to His king* (1 Samuel 2:10). Who is His king? The anonymous king, King Messiah.[284] Here too, *to Your servant*—King Messiah, as we have said, the anonymous king.[285]

"*And save the son of Your maidservant*. Now, wasn't he the son of Jesse?[286] But we have established that when coming to request something supernal, one should mention that of which he is certain; so he mentioned his mother, not his father.[287] Further, we have learned that this is the king, as we have said."[288]

Rabbi Shim'on said, "Come and see what is written: *There was* ריב (*riv*), *a quarrel, between the herders of Abram's cattle* [*and the herders of Lot's cattle*] (Genesis 13:7)—spelled רב (*rv*), missing the י (*yod*);[289] for Lot sought to revert to the idolatry practiced by the inhabitants of the land, as proven by the conclusion of the verse: *and the Canaanites and Perizzites were then dwelling in the land*.[290] How do we know that Lot reverted to his decay—idolatry? For it is written: *Lot journeyed* מקדם (*mi-qedem*), *from the east* (ibid., 11).[291] What is *mi-qedem?* מקדמונו (*Mi-qadmono*) From the Primordial One, of the world.[292] Here is written: *Lot journeyed mi-qedem*, and there is written: *When they journeyed mi-qedem, from the east* (ibid. 11:2).[293] Just as there they journeyed from the Primordial One of the world, so here did he.

"As soon as Abraham realized that Lot inclined toward this, immediately *Abram said to Lot, 'Please separate yourself from me!* (ibid. 13:8–9)—you are not worthy to join me.' So Abraham separated from him, not wanting to accompany him, for whoever associates with a sinner eventually imitates him and is punished [84b] because of him.[294] How do we know? From Jehoshaphat, who joined with Ahab.[295] Had it not been for the merit of his ancestors,[296] he would have been punished there, as is written: *Jehoshaphat cried out*, and then he was saved, as is

written: *God lured them away from him* (2 Chronicles 18:31).[297]

"So Abraham refused to accompany Lot. Nevertheless, Lot refused to turn back from his repulsiveness; rather, *Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed* מקדם (*mi-qedem*), *from the east* (Genesis 13:11), journeying מן קדמאה (*min qadma'ah*), from the Primordial One, of the world—not seeking to cleave to perfect faith like Abraham.

"*Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan* (ibid., 12), to cleave to the realm of faith,[298] to grasp the wisdom of cleaving to his Lord. *While Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, pitching his tent as far as Sodom* (ibid.), with those sinners of the world who had abandoned faith, as is written: *The people of Sodom were very wicked sinners against YHVH* (ibid., 13). Each one diverged on his own way appropriately.

"So, happy are the Companions who engage in Torah day and night, whose companionship is with the blessed Holy One! Of them is written: *You, cleaving to YHVH your God, are alive every one of you today!* (Deuteronomy 4:4)."

YHVH said to Abram, after Lot had parted from him (Genesis 13:14).[299]

Rabbi Abba opened, "*Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of YHVH* (Jonah 1:3). Who can flee from the presence of the blessed Holy One, of whom is written: *'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' declares YHVH* (Jeremiah 23:24)? And yet he tried to flee His presence?

"However, it is written: יונתי (*Yonati*), *My dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff* (Song of Songs 2:14). *My dove*—Assembly of Israel.[300] *In the clefts of the rock*—Jerusalem, towering above the whole world.[301] Just as a rock is supreme and mighty above all, so is Jerusalem. *In the covert of the cliff*—the Holy Temple, site called Holy of Holies, heart of the whole world.[302] So it is written: *in the*

covert of the cliff, for there *Shekhinah* concealed Herself, like a woman secluded for her husband, not venturing outside the house, as is said: *Your wife like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house* (Psalms 128:3).[303] Similarly, Assembly of Israel does not dwell outside Her domain, in the secrecy of the steep,[304] except in time of exile, when She is in exile,[305] and because She is, other nations enjoy greater prosperity and tranquility.

"Come and see: When Israel dwelled in the Holy Land, all was arrayed fittingly, the throne perfect above them.[306] They performed the rite, piercing the atmospheric belts of the world, and that rite ascended to its site, for the land is tillable by Israel alone.[307] So other nations kept aloof, not ruling as now, being nourished only by drippings.[308]

"Now, you might say 'Look, we see there were numerous kings ruling over the world while the Temple stood!' Come and see: In the era of the First Temple, before Israel defiled the land,[309] other nations did not rule but were nourished by drippings, through which they ruled, yet limitedly. Once Israel sinned—defiling the land—they thrust *Shekhinah* from Her site, as it were,[310] and She was drawn toward another place;[311] then other nations prevailed, and were empowered to rule.

"Come and see: The land of Israel is not ruled by any official or by anyone other than the blessed Holy One Himself.[312] When Israel sinned by offering incense to alien gods within the land, *Shekhinah* was driven from Her site, as it were. By offering incense, they attracted alien gods to *Shekhinah*, interlinking them, so dominion was yielded to them,[313] for incense constitutes a nexible nexus.[314] Ever since, other nations have ruled, prophets have ceased,[315] and all those supernal rungs[316] no longer prevail on earth. Other nations were not divested of dominion, for they drew *Shekhinah* to themselves. So in the era of the Second Temple, their dominion was not withdrawn; all the more so during the exile of *Shekhinah* among other nations, where other

officials rule. So they all suck from *Shekhinah*, who was drawn toward them.

"Therefore [85a] when Israel dwelled in the land—performing the rite of the blessed Holy One—*Shekhinah* was secluded among them, never venturing outside the house to reveal Herself.[317] So all the prophets living at that time received prophecy only in Her domain, as we have said. That is why Jonah fled outside the Holy Land, so prophecy would not be revealed to him and he would not have to go on the mission of the blessed Holy One.[318]

"Now, you might say 'Look, we see that *Shekhinah* revealed Herself in Babylon, which is outside!' But they have established that it is written: הָיה הָיה (*Hayoh hayah*), *Happening it happened* (Ezekiel 1:3)[319]—what happened had never happened before, ever since the day the Temple was built, and this prophecy happened for that particular moment.[320] It is written: עַל נְהַר כְּבָר (*al nehar kevar*), *by the River Kevar* (ibid.). What does this mean? River of Already, already existing since the day the world was created,[321] upon which *Shekhinah* reveals Herself constantly, as is written: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides* [*and becomes four riverheads*]. *The name of the first is* … (Genesis 2:10–11).[322] This is one of them,[323] and there She revealed Herself at that precise moment because in their suffering Israel needed Her. But at other times She does not reveal Herself.[324] So Jonah, in order that *Shekhinah* not settle upon him nor reveal Herself to him, left the Holy Land and fled, as is written: *from the presence of YHVH*.

"Come and see: Just as *Shekhinah* reveals Herself only in a place befitting Her, so too She manifests and reveals Herself only in a person befitting Her. For look, ever since Lot entertained the desire to revert to his repulsiveness,[325] Holy Spirit[326] departed from Abraham! As soon as Lot parted from him, immediately Holy Spirit settled in its site,

as is written: *YHVH said to Abram, after Lot had parted from him…*[327]

"Come and see: When Abraham saw that Lot had relapsed into his repulsiveness, he was frightened and wondered, 'Perhaps, perish the thought, because of associating with this one, I have lost the holy share with which the blessed Holy One crowned me!' As soon as he parted from him,[328] He said to him, *Raise your eyes now and look from the place where you are* (ibid. 13:14). What is meant by *where you are*? Where you cleaved at first and were crowned in perfect faith.[329] *To the north, to the south, to the east, to the west*—his journeys undertaken at first, as is written: *He went on his journeys* (ibid., 3),[330] and similarly: *continually journeying toward the Negev* (ibid. 12:9)[331]—supernal rungs, for first he was crowned in perfect faith and then assured it would never depart from him and his descendants, as is written: *For all the land that you see* [*I will give to you and to your seed forever*] (ibid. 13:14). What is meant by *that you* רואה (*ro'eh*), *see*? The first rung that was revealed to him, as is said: *to YHVH* הנראה (*ha-nir'eh*), *who had been seen, by him* (ibid. 12:7).[332] So, *that you see*—for this rung comprises all those rungs, all seen within it.[333] So, *for all the land that you see…*"

Rabbi El'azar came upon an inn at Lydda, and with him was Rabbi Ḥizkiyah. He rose at night to engage in Torah; Rabbi Ḥizkiyah rose alongside him.[334] Rabbi El'azar said to him, "In a village castle Companions appear."[335]

Rabbi El'azar opened, saying, "*Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I delighted to sit, and his fruit is sweet to my mouth* (Song of Songs 2:3).

"*Like an apple tree*—the blessed Holy One, more desirable and adorned in colors than all other trees, for none compares with Him.[336] Distinguished among all, for no other is like Him.

“So, *in his shade I delighted to sit. In his shade*, not in another shade; *in his shade*, not in the shade of other officials.[337] *I delighted*. When? From the day Abraham came into the world, for he desired and loved the blessed Holy One passionately, as is said: *Abraham, My lover* (Isaiah 41:8).[338]

“*And his fruit is sweet to my mouth*—Isaac, holy fruit.[339]

“Alternatively, *In his shade I delighted to sit*—Jacob.[340] *And his fruit is sweet to my mouth*—Joseph the Righteous, who generates holy fruit in the world.[341] Similarly it is written: *These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph* (Genesis 37:2), for all those generations of Jacob inhere in Joseph, who engenders generations corresponding to all the tribes.[342] So Israel is named after Ephraim, as is written: *Is not Ephraim My dear son?* (Jeremiah 31:20).[343]

“Alternatively, *Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest*—Abraham, who resembles an apple emitting fragrance,[344] distinguished [85b] by perfect faith above all his contemporaries, distinguished as one above, distinguished as one below, as is written: *Abraham was one* (Ezekiel 33:24). Why was he *one*? Because no one else on earth ascended into the faith of the blessed Holy One.”[345]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said to him, “But it is written: *and the souls they had made in Haran* (Genesis 12:5)!”[346]

He replied, “They had not yet attained the supernal rungs with which Abraham was crowned.”[347]

Later he told him,[348] “I have also heard that Abraham was not called *one* until he culminated in Isaac and Jacob. Once he did so, and all three of them constituted the patriarchs of the world,[349] Abraham was called *one* and became the apple of the world, distinguished above all inhabitants of the world.”

He said to him, “You have spoken well!”

“Alternatively, *Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest*—as has been said, the blessed Holy One. *So is my*

beloved among the young men—the blessed Holy One. *In his shade*—the blessed Holy One.[350] *I delighted to sit*—on the day the blessed Holy One revealed Himself on Mount Sinai and Israel received the Torah, saying: *We will do and we will listen* (Exodus 24:7).[351] *And his fruit is sweet to my mouth*—words of Torah, of which is written: *sweeter than honey and drippings of the comb* (Psalms 19:11).[352]

"Alternatively, *His fruit is sweet to my mouth*—souls of the righteous, all of whom are fruit of the blessed Holy One, abiding with Him above.[353]

"Come and see: All souls of the world—fruit of the handiwork of the blessed Holy One—are all one, in one mystery. In descending to the world, they all separate into modes: male and female—male and female joined as one.[354]

"Come and see: Desire of female for male generates soul; desire of male for female generates soul;[355] passionate desire of male for female and his cleaving to her pours forth soul. He encompasses desire of female, absorbing it, so lower desire is comprised within desire above, becoming one passion, undivided. Then female absorbs all, is impregnated by male, both desires cleaving as one. So all comprises one another.

"When souls issue, they issue male and female as one. Subsequently, as they descend they separate, one to this side, one to that side, and later the blessed Holy One couples them. Coupling is entrusted to the blessed Holy One alone, for He knows their mates, to join them fittingly.[356] Happy is the human who acts virtuously, walking the way of truth, for soul is joined to soul as they were originally![357] If he acts virtuously, he becomes a complete, fitting human being.[358] So it is written: *His fruit* מתוק (*matoq*), *is sweet, to my mouth*—תקונא (*tiqquna*), a restoration, bestowing blessing, so that the world may be blessed because of him;[359] for all depends on the deeds of a human—on whether he is virtuous or not."

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, “I have heard as follows. It is written: *From Me your fruit appears* (Hosea 14:9). The blessed Holy One says to Assembly of Israel,[360] ‘*From Me*, literally, *your fruit appears*.’[361] The verse does not read *My fruit*, but rather *your fruit*—that desire of the female generating the soul, absorbed within the potency of the male, soul comprised in soul, becoming one, comprising one another. Afterward, the two of them appear in the world;[362] certainly through the power of the male appears the fruit of the female.

“Alternatively, through desire of the female appears the fruit of the male, for without desire of the female toward the male, fruit would never be generated, as is written: *From Me your fruit appears*.”[363]

In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar…(Genesis 14:1).[364] Rabbi Yose opened, “*Who aroused from the East, calling righteousness to follow him?*…(Isaiah 41:2).[365] This verse has been established by the Companions,[366] but this verse entails a mystery of wisdom, for we have learned: The blessed Holy One fashioned seven expanses above,[367] all to reveal His glory, all standing to declare the mystery of supernal faith.

“Come and see: There is a supernal expanse, concealed, above them—an expanse guiding them, illumining them all.[368] This is unknowable, susceptible to questioning yet unknown, for it is concealed and deep; all are bewildered by it. So it is called מי (*Mi*), Who?—as they have established,[369] for it is written: *From the womb of* מי (*mi*), *whom, emerged the ice* (Job 38:29). This has been explained.[370]

“This is the supernal expanse [86a] standing above all those seven. Below is an expanse lower than them all, not shining.[371] Since it is lower, not shining, the expanse above them joins it.[372] These two letters it absorbs and is called ים,

(*Yam*), Sea, of the supernal expanse called מי (*Mi*), Who;[373] for all those other expanses turn into streams, entering it, so it becomes Supernal Sea[374]—generating fruit and fish, according to their species.[375] Concerning this David exclaimed: *This sea, vast and wide, with gliding creatures innumerable, living things small and great* (Psalms 104:25).

"So it is written: *Who aroused from the East, calling righteousness to follow him? Who aroused from the East*—Abraham.[376] *Calling righteousness to follow him*—lowest of all the expanses, becoming a sea.[377]

"*He delivers up nations to him* (Isaiah, ibid.). Who? This lowest expanse we have mentioned, who wreaks vengeance and overthrows enemies.[378] On this David prided himself: *You made my enemies turn their backs to me, my foes I annihilated* (Psalms 18:41).[379]

"*He delivers up nations to him*—the nations pursued by Abraham,[380] slain by the blessed Holy One.

"*And tramples kings* (Isaiah, ibid.). What does this mean? Kings appointed over them above.[381]

"*He delivers up nations to him*—nations below. *And tramples kings*—appointed princes above, for when the blessed Holy One executes judgment against a nation, He does so totally, above and below.[382]

"*He pursues them*, יעבור שלום (*ya'avor shalom*), *and passes unscathed, by a way his feet have not traveled* (Isaiah 41:3). *He pursues them*—Abraham, for Abraham pursued them and the blessed Holy One passed before him, slaying them,[383] as is written: יעבור שלום (*ya'avor shalom*), *peace passes*—the blessed Holy One, called *Shalom*, Peace.[384]

"*By a way his feet have not traveled*. Would you imagine that Abraham was traveling in the clouds or by horse and chariot?[385] Rather, *By way of his feet he did not travel*, for no angel or messenger preceded Abraham, rather the blessed Holy One alone, as is written: *By way of his feet*.[386] Who are *his feet*? Angels, beneath the blessed Holy One, as

is said: *On that day His feet will stand…* (Zechariah 14:4).[387]

"Alternatively, *Who aroused from the East?* Come and see: When the blessed Holy One aroused the world to bring Abraham close to Him,[388] this arousal transpired because Jacob was destined to issue from him and raise twelve tribes, all virtuous before the blessed Holy One.[389]

"צדק יקראהו לרגלו (*Tsedeq yiqra'ehu le-raglo*), *Righteousness calling him to follow him*, for the blessed Holy One called him constantly ever since the day the world was created, as is said: *calling the generations from the beginning* (Isaiah 41:4). So, *tsedeq yiqra'ehu, righteousness calling him*, literally![390] *To follow him*, linking him to His service, drawing him near to Him, as is said: *the people who follow you* (Exodus 11:8).[391]

"Alternatively, *Who aroused from the East*, for there light begins to radiate,[392] since the potency of the light of the South issues from the East.[393] So, *Who aroused* that light of the South. *From the East*, for He absorbs and is nourished first, and that supernal expanse desires to extend it to the East.[394]

"*Righteousness calling him to follow him*—West, who calls Him constantly, never subsiding, as is said: אלהים (*Elohim*), *O God, do not be silent; do not be quiet or still, O God!* (Psalms 83:2).[395] For West constantly arouses toward Him.

"*He delivers up nations to him and tramples kings*, for from Him He receives power to subdue all those nations of the world."[396]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "*Who aroused from the East?*—Abraham, who absorbed arousal toward the blessed Holy One solely from the East. Since he saw the sun emerging in the morning from the East, his soul aroused to the awareness that it was the blessed Holy One. He said, 'This is the King who created me!' He worshiped it the whole day. In the evening, seeing the sun shrivel and darkness

advance, he said, ‘Certainly this rules over the one I worshiped all day, which darkened before it and shines no more!’ So he worshiped the night. In the morning he saw darkness disappear and the East brighten. He said, ‘Certainly over all these reigns a king, a ruler conducting them!’[397] Once the blessed Holy One saw Abraham’s desire toward Him, He revealed Himself to him and spoke with him, as is written: *Righteousness calling him to follow him*—speaking with him, revealing Himself to him.”

Rabbi Yitsḥak opened, “*Speaking righteousness, declaring what is right* (Isaiah 45:19). [86b] All the words of the blessed Holy One are true, and He acts according to *what is right*. How so? When the blessed Holy One created the world, it was unstable, tottering to and fro. The blessed Holy One said to the world, ‘What is making you totter?’

“It replied, ‘Master of the universe! I cannot stand because I lack a firm foundation.’

“He said, ‘I intend to erect in you a righteous human, Abraham, who will love Me.’

“Immediately the world stood firm, as is written: *These are the generations of heaven and earth* בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created* (Genesis 2:4). Do not read בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created*, but rather באברהם (*be-Avraham*), through Abraham.[398] Through Abraham the world was established.”

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “*Declaring what is right*, for the world responded to the blessed Holy One, ‘From Abraham are destined to issue descendants who will destroy the Temple and burn the Torah.’[399]

“He replied, ‘A man named Jacob is destined to issue from him, from whom will issue twelve tribes, all virtuous.’

“Immediately the world stabilized for his sake,[400] as is written: *Declaring what is right*.”[401]

Rabbi El’azar said, “We have aroused our awareness: וידבר (*vaydabber*), *He spoke*; ויגד (*va-yagged*), *He declared*; ויאמר (*va-yomer*), *He said*—all diverge in meaning.[402] *Vaydabber, He*

spoke, is revealed—an outer rung, not as inner as those supernal rungs: דובר (*dover*), *speaking, righteousness*.[403] *Va-yagged*, *He declared*, alluding to an inner, supernal rung, controlling speech: מגיד (*maggid*), *declaring, what is right*.[404] Who is *what is right*? Supernal rung inhabited by Jacob, as is written: *You established what is right* (Psalms 99:4).[405] So it is written: *maggid, declaring*, not: *dover, speaking*."

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "But look at what is written: ויגד (*Va-yagged*), *He declared, to you His covenant* (Deuteronomy 4:13)!"[406]

He replied, "Certainly so! That rung controls the lower one: *speaking righteousness*.[407] All is intended for contemplation. Come and see: Even though דבר (*davar*), word,[408] is low, do not think it is not high—it is certainly filled with everything, a supernal rung.[409] Your mnemonic: *It is not an empty word for you* (ibid. 32:47)."[410]

Rabbi El'azar was going to the house of his father-in-law[411] along with Rabbi Ḥiyya, Rabbi Yose, and Rabbi Ḥizkiyah. Rabbi El'azar said, "I see that arousal above transpires only with arousal below, for arousal above depends on desire below."[412]

He opened, saying, "אלהים (*Elohim*), *O God, do not be silent; do not be quiet or still, O God!* (Psalms 83:2). This is arousal below,[413] intending to prevail. David exclaimed,[414] '*Elohim, do not be silent!*'—arousing above, joining the Right.[415] Why? *For look, Your enemies… They conspire with a single mind, forming an alliance against You* (ibid., 3, 6). So, *Elohim, do not be silent!*—arousing above, for then Right arouses, linking with Her. Once She is linked with Right, foes are crushed, as is written: *Your right hand, O YHVH, majestic in power; Your right hand, O YHVH, shatters the enemy* (Exodus 15:6).

"Come and see: When all those kings joined forces to wage war against Abraham,[416] they plotted to eliminate him. Once they overpowered Lot, Abraham's nephew, they

immediately went away, as is written: *They took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions, and departed* (Genesis 14:12). Why? Because he resembled Abraham.[417] So *they departed*, for that entire war was fought over him. Why? Because Abraham extricated inhabitants of the world from idolatry and introduced them to the worship of the blessed Holy One.[418] Further, the blessed Holy One incited them in order to enhance Abraham's name on earth and draw him to His service.[419]

"Mystery of the matter: As soon as Abraham aroused to pursue them, *Elohim, do not be silent!*—until all linked with Abraham.[420] When all linked with Abraham, all those kings were crushed before him, as we have said, for it is written: *Your right hand, O YHVH, shatters the enemy*."

Melchizedek, king of Salem (Genesis 14:18).[421] Rabbi Shim'on opened,[422] "*In Salem is His tabernacle…* (Psalms 76:3). Come and see: When it arose in the will of the blessed Holy One to create the world, He generated a single flame of a lamp of impenetrable darkness[423] and blew spark against spark. It darkened and ignited. From the recesses of the abyss He generated [87a] a single drop and joined them as one, thereby creating the world.[424]

"The flame ascended, crowned on the left; the drop ascended, crowned on the right. Culminating in one another, they exchanged places, one to this side, one to that, the descendent ascending, the ascendent descending, both intertwining. Between them issued רוח שלים (*ruaḥ shelim*), perfect spirit, so those two sides turned into one;[425] it was placed between them—they were crowned with one another. Then שלם (*shelam*), peace, prevailed above, peace below, and the rung stabilized.[426] ה (*He*) was crowned with ו (*vav*), ו (*vav*) with ה (*he*), then ה (*he*) ascended, bound in a perfect bond.[427] Then: *Melchizedek*, מלך שלם (*melekh shalem*),

king of Salem—perfect king, indeed, a king ruling perfectly![428] When is He *melekh shalem*? On Yom Kippur, when all faces beam.[429]

"Alternatively, *Melchizedek*—last world;[430] *king of Salem*—supernal world,[431] crowned with one another inseparably, two worlds as one. Even the lower world constitutes all, a single entity.[432]

"*Brought out bread and wine*,[433] for She contains both of these.[434]

"*He was priest of God Most High*, world serving world.[435]

"*He was priest*—the Right; *of God Most High*—supernal world.[436] So the priest must bless the world.[437]

"Come and see the blessings absorbed by this lower world when joined with the High Priest.[438] Then *he blessed him, saying 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High'* (ibid., 19).[439] Certainly so! Correspondingly, the priest below must cluster clusters, blessing this site so that it will link with the Right, linking two worlds as one.[440]

"*Blessed be Abram*. Mystery of the word: instituting blessings.[441] *Blessed be Abram*, as we say: 'Blessed are You.' *Of God Most High—'YHVH*, our God.' *Possessor of Heaven and Earth*—'King of the world.' This verse constitutes the mystery of blessings. So, *He blessed him*, from below.[442] *Blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your foes into your hand* (ibid., 20), from above to below.[443]

"*He gave him a tenth of everything* (ibid.), to cleave to the site where a cluster clusters below."[444]

While they were walking, they encountered Rabbi Yeisa, accompanied by a certain Jew. That Jew was discussing: *Of David. To You, YHVH, I lift up my soul* (Psalms 25:1). "*Of David*. Why is it not written: *A psalm of David*, or *Of David, a psalm*?[445] Because he exclaimed *Of David* on behalf of his rung, praising it.[446]

“*To You, YHVH, I lift up my soul. To You, YHVH*—above.[447] *I lift up my soul*. Who is *my soul*? David, first rung, as we have mentioned.[448] *I lift up*—I raise, as is said: *I lift up my eyes to the mountains* (ibid. 121:1), for every day he strove to raise his rung, to be crowned above, to be linked there perfectly, fittingly.[449]

“Similarly, *Of David. Bless YHVH, O my soul* (ibid. 103:1). He spoke on behalf of David, his rung. What did he say? *Bless* את יהוה (*et YHVH*), *O my soul*. את (*Et*), to be linked firmly above.[450]

“*And all my inmost being* (ibid.). Who is *my inmost being*? Other creatures of the field,[451] called ‘inmost beings,’ as is said: *My innards stirred for him* (Song of Songs 5:4).[452]

“Alternatively, *Bless, O my soul*—speaking on his own behalf.[453] *Et YHVH*—consummation of all; *et YHVH*—totality of all.”[454]

Rabbi El’azar said to Rabbi Yeisa, “I see that you have arrived united with *Shekhinah*!”[455]

He replied, “Certainly so! I’ve been walking with him for three parasangs,[456] and he has told me numerous sublime words. When I hired him for the day, I didn’t realize that he was a radiant lamp,[457] as now!”

Rabbi El’azar asked him, “What is your name?”

He replied, “Yo’ezer.”

He said, “Let Yo’ezer and El’azar sit together!”[458]

They sat by a rock [87b] in the field. The Jew opened, saying, "*I, I am He who obliterates your transgressions for My own sake, and your sins I will not remember* (Isaiah 43:25). Why two times: *I, I*?[459] Because one alludes to Sinai, and one to the moment He created the world, as is written: *I am YHVH your God* (Exodus 20:2)—at Sinai, and when He created the world: *I made the earth and created humankind upon it* (Isaiah 45:12).

"*He,*[460] showing there is no separation between above and below.[461]

"*Obliterates your transgressions*. It is not written: *removes your transgressions*, but rather: *obliterates*, so they never be seen again.

"*For My own sake*. What does this mean? 'For the compassion deriving from Me,' as is written: *YHVH your God is a compassionate God* (Deuteronomy 4:31).

"Alternatively, *obliterates your transgressions for My own sake*. Come and see: The wicked of the world produce a defect above; for when those sins ascend, compassion disappears, supernal radiance and suckling of blessings no longer descend, and this rung does not absorb blessings from above to suckle those below. So, *for My own sake*, so that blessings will not be withheld from suckling above.[462]

"Similarly, *See now that I, I am He* (ibid. 32:39), showing there is no separation between above and below, as has been said.

"Come and see, correspondingly: When righteous humans appear in the world, they arouse blessings for all worlds. As soon as Abraham appeared, he aroused blessings for the world, as is written: *I will bless you, and you will be a blessing* (Genesis 12:2). What is *you will be a blessing*? An allusion that for his sake blessings would manifest above and below, as is written: *Through you all families of the earth will be blessed*, and: *I will bless those who bless you* (ibid., 3).[463]

“Isaac appeared and revealed to all that judgment and Judge prevail above, punishing sinners. He aroused judgment in the world, so that all its inhabitants would fear the blessed Holy One.[464]

“Jacob appeared and aroused compassion in the world, perfecting faith in the world fittingly.[465]

“In the days of Abraham what is written? *Melchizedek, king of* שלם (*Shalem*), *Salem*,[466] for the throne was crowned in its site, so the King manifested *shalem*, perfectly, flawlessly.[467]

“*Brought out bread and wine*—brought forth nourishment for all worlds fittingly. *Brought out bread and wine*, for blessings were not withheld from all those worlds. *Brought out*, as is said: *Let the earth bring forth* (ibid. 1:24).[468] From rungs above He brought forth nourishment and blessings for all the worlds.[469]

“*He was priest of God Most High*, for all manifested in supernal perfection,[470] showing that just as sinners taint the world and withhold blessings, so the righteous bring blessings to the world and through them all its inhabitants are blessed.

“*He gave him a tenth of everything*.[471] What is *a tenth of everything*? Of those blessings issuing *from everything*, for from that site issue all blessings descending to the world.[472]

“Alternatively, *He gave him a tenth of everything*—the blessed Holy One gave him a tenth.[473] Who is that? A rung on which abide all openings of faith and blessings of the world.[474] A tenth, one of ten, ten of a hundred.[475] From here Abraham entered supernal existence fittingly.”

Rabbi El’azar said to him, “You have spoken well!”

He then asked him, “What is your work?”

He replied, “Teaching tender children where I live, but now Rabbi Yose from the village of Ḥanin came to town, and they were taken away from me and assigned to him. The townspeople kept paying my salary as when the children

were with me, but gazing into my soul, I realized it was improper to benefit from them for nothing, so I hired myself to this sage."[476]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Father's blessings are required here!"

They rose and afterwards came into the presence of Rabbi Shim'on.[477] Every day he sat engaged in study in the presence of Rabbi Shim'on. One day he engaged in the washing of hands.[478] He[479] said, "Whoever does not wash his hands properly, although he is punished above, is punished below. What is his punishment below? He brings poverty upon himself.[480] Just as this is his punishment, so one who washes his hands properly attains for himself supernal blessings, settling on his hands, and he is blessed with wealth." [88a]

Afterwards Rabbi Shim'on caught sight of him filling his hands with water, washing them with great quantities of water. Rabbi Shim'on exclaimed, "Fill his hands with Your blessings!"[481] So it was: from that day on he grew rich, discovering treasure. He would engage in Torah and feed the poor every day, rejoicing with them, smiling at them radiantly. Rabbi Shim'on proclaimed for him, "*You will rejoice in YHVH, and glory in the Holy One of Israel* (Isaiah 41:16)."

After these things the word of YHVH came to Abram in a vision… (Genesis 15:1).[482]

Rabbi Yehudah opened, "*I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me* (Song of Songs 7:11). They have already established that through an arousal below arises an arousal above, for nothing arouses above until something arouses below.[483] Blessings from above manifest only at a site of substance, not emptiness.

"How do we know? From the wife of Obadiah, to whom Elisha said, '*Tell me, what do you have in the house?*' (2

Kings 4:2).[484] For blessings from above do not abide on an empty table or an empty place.[485] What is written? *She replied, 'Your maidservant has nothing at all in the house, except* אסוך (*asukh*), *a flask, of oil'* (ibid.). Why *except asukh*? She said, 'The amount of oil here is only enough to anoint a little finger.'[486] He replied, 'You have relieved me! For I did not know how blessings from above could abide in an empty place, but now that you have some oil, this is a place where blessings can manifest.'

"How do we know? Because it is written: *Like fine oil…* (Psalms 133:2), and how does the psalm conclude? *For there YHVH ordained blessing, everlasting life* (ibid., 3). Here blessings abide.[487]

"Now, you might say '*Like the dew of Hermon that descends upon the mountains of Zion* (ibid.)—not *oil, dew*!'[488] Still, oil and dew are one and the same.[489] The blessed Holy One distilled that dew from supernal oil, for that oil issues on the right side.

"There are two: wine and oil, flowing to two sides: wine to the left, oil to the right.[490] From the right issue blessings to the world; from there Holy Kingdom is anointed.[491] Since oil was prepared below first, oil was readied above, gushing blessings.[492]

"Come and see: By arousal of this [88b] oil from above, it is poised to pour upon David and Solomon so that their descendants will be blessed.[493] How do we know?[494] Because it is written: *The oil stood* (2 Kings 4:6).[495] Here is written: *stood*, and there is written: *the root of Jesse that stands as a banner for the nations* (Isaiah 11:10).[496]

"Come and see from the table of the Bread of the Presence, source of blessing and nourishment for the world: it must not be left empty for even a single moment, so blessings not vanish.[497] Similarly, one does not bless over an empty table, for blessings from above do not settle on an empty table.[498]

“Come and see what is written: *I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me*. First, *I am my beloved’s*. Then, *his desire is for me*.[499] *I am my beloved’s*, preparing a place for Him first. Then, *his desire is for me*.

“Alternatively, *I am my beloved’s*, for we have learned: *Shekhinah* is not found among sinners,[500] but once a person begins to purify himself—drawing near the blessed Holy One—*Shekhinah* dwells upon him, as is written: *I am my beloved’s*, first; then, *his desire is for me*. If one comes to purify himself, he is purified.[501]

“Come and see: *After these things*—after Abraham pursued these kings and the blessed Holy One slew them,[502] Abraham was dismayed, thinking: Perhaps, Heaven forbid, I have diminished that reward! I restored human beings to the blessed Holy One, grasping them and drawing them close to Him, and now humans have been killed by Him! Immediately the blessed Holy One said to him, ‘*Fear not, Abram…, your reward is very great* (Genesis 15:1). You will be rewarded because of them, for none of them would have ever been virtuous.’[503]

“*The word of YHVH came to Abram* במחזה (*be-maḥazeh*), *in a vision*. What does *be-maḥazeh* mean? In that חיזו (*ḥeizu*), mirror—a rung in which all images appear.”[504]

Rabbi Shim’on said, “Come and see: Before Abraham was circumcised, one rung spoke with him. Who was that? *Maḥazeh*, as is written: *He envisages maḥazeh, a vision of, Shaddai* (Numbers 24:4).[505] Once he was circumcised, all those rungs rested upon this rung, who then spoke with him, as is written: *I appeared* [89a] *to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through El Shaddai* (Exodus 6:3).[506] Until he was circumcised those rungs did not rest upon him, speaking.

“Now, you might say ‘At first is written: *YHVH appeared to Abram* (Genesis 12:7), *Abram journeyed, continually journeying toward the Negev* (ibid., 9), and *He built an altar there to YHVH* (ibid., 7). Look, here are those supernal rungs![507] Yet now we say that until he was circumcised

those supernal rungs did not rest upon this rung to speak with him.'

"Come and see: At first the blessed Holy One granted wisdom to Abraham so he would know the wisdom of cleaving to Him; he discovered the mystery of faith,[508] but only this lower rung spoke with him.[509] As soon as he was circumcised, all those supernal rungs rested upon this rung to speak with him. Then Abraham ascended completely, as has been said.

"Come and see: Until a man is circumcised, he is not linked with the name of the blessed Holy One. Once circumcised, he enters His name and is linked with it.[510] Now, you might say 'Abraham was linked with it before he was circumcised!'[511] So he was, but not fittingly. For out of the supernal love with which the blessed Holy One loved him, He drew him near. Subsequently He commanded him to circumcise himself, and when he did, he was granted Covenant—cluster of all those supernal rungs; Covenant—cluster, all clustering as one, interlacing; Covenant—cluster in which all clusters.[512] So until Abraham was circumcised, the word manifested to him only in *maḥazeh*, as has been said.

"Come and see: When the blessed Holy One created the world, it was created only through Covenant, as is said: בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *In the beginning, God created* (Genesis 1:1)—namely, ברית (*berit*), covenant,[513] for through Covenant the blessed Holy One erected and sustains the world, as is written: *Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth* (Jeremiah 33:25).[514] For Covenant is the nexus of *day and night*, inseparable."[515]

Rabbi El'azar said, "When the blessed Holy One created the world, it was on condition: 'When Israel appears, if they accept Torah, fine; if not, I will reduce you back to chaos.'[516] The world was not firmly established until Israel stood at Mount Sinai and accepted Torah; then the world

stood firm. Ever since that day, the blessed Holy One has been creating worlds. What are they? Human couplings, for since then the blessed Holy One has been matchmaking, proclaiming: 'The daughter of so-and-so for so-and-so!' These are the worlds He creates.[517]

"Come and see: *I am your shield* (Genesis 15:1). *I*—the first rung, to which he was originally linked.[518] [90a]

"*Abram said*, 'אדני יהוה (*Adonai YHVH*), *My Lord God*' (ibid., 2)[519]—אלף דלת נון יוד (*alef, dalet, nun, yod*); *Elohim:* יוד הא ואו הא (*yod, he, vav, he*). But the mystery of the word: union of two worlds as one, lower world and upper world.[520]

"*What can You give me, seeing that I go* ערירי (*ariri*), *naked of children?* (ibid.)—for look, I have no son; and we have learned that whoever has no son in this world is called *ariri*, as is said: *Aririm, Naked of children, they will be!* (Leviticus 20:21).[521]

"Now, why did Abraham utter this word, saying: *What can You give me?* It seems as if he did not believe in the blessed Holy One! But actually the blessed Holy One said to him, '*I am your shield*—in this world; *your reward is very great*—in the world that is coming.'[522] Immediately Abraham was aroused by the mystery of wisdom and said, '*What can You give me?* For I know that a human being who has not engendered a son does not receive the reward of entering that world.' So he said, '*What can You give me, seeing that I go naked of children?* You cannot give me what I do not deserve!' From here we learn that one who has not attained sons in this world does not gain entry through the curtain of that world.[523]

"Abraham saw from his horoscope that he would not engender children. What is written? ויוצא (*Va-yotse*), *He took* (*him*) [90b] *outside* (Genesis 15:5).[524] The blessed Holy One said to him, 'צא (*Tse*), Leave, your astrological speculations! Abram does not engender; Abraham does engender.'[525] The blessed Holy One said to him, 'Do not gaze at that, but rather at the mystery of My name: כה (*Koh*), *So, shall your*

seed be (ibid.)'—mystery of the holy name;[526] from there a son was linked to him, not from the other aspect.[527] *Koh*—the aspect emerging from the aspect of *Gevurah*, from which Isaac emerged.[528] That aspect of *Gevurah* is called *Koh*, because from there fruit and verdure enter the world,[529] not from the aspect of stars and constellations below.

"Then, *He trusted in YHVH* (ibid., 6)—cleaving above, not cleaving below. *He trusted in YHVH*—not in stars and constellations. *He trusted in YHVH*—who had promised to multiply his reward in the world that is coming. *He trusted in YHVH*—in that rung granted to him,[530] that from there seed would reach him so he could engender in the world.

"ויחשבה לו (*Va-yaḥsheveha lo*), *And He deemed it* (*as righteousness*) *on his part* (ibid.). ויחשב ה׳ לו׳ (*Va-yaḥshov he le-vav*), And he deemed ה (*he*) as ו (*vav*)—for although She is Judgment, it was as if She were Compassion.[531]

"Alternatively, *And he deemed Her as* צדקה (*tsedaqah*), *righteousness, on his part*—linking upper link with lower, joining them as one.[532]

"Come and see: 'Abram does not engender.' Now, you might say 'Look, he engendered Ishmael while he was still Abram!'[533] But as long as he was Abram, he did not engender the son promised him by the blessed Holy One. For as long as he was Abram, he engendered below; once he was named Abraham and entered the covenant,[534] he engendered above. So Abram does not engender in the upper cluster;[535] Abraham did engender, as we have said, becoming linked above with Isaac."[536]

When Abram was ninety-nine years old [*YHVH appeared to Abram*]...(Genesis 17:1).[537]

Rabbi Abba opened, "*For who is God apart from YHVH? Who is a rock except our God?* (2 Samuel 22:32).[538] King David proclaimed this verse: *For who is God apart from YHVH?* What ruler or official is there who can accomplish

anything *apart from* YHVH—other than what has been commanded by the blessed Holy One?[539] For none of them is independent or can do anything.

"*Who is a rock?* Who is strong, able to perform mighty feats on his own, *apart from* YHVH? Rather, they are all in the power of the blessed Holy One, unable to accomplish anything without His authority.

"Alternatively, *For who is God apart from YHVH?*—for all is in the power of the blessed Holy One, not as appears from the configuration of stars and constellations: they all signify something, yet the blessed Holy One transforms it into a different aspect.[540]

"*Who is* צור (*tsur*), *a rock, except our God?* They have already established that there is no צייר (*tsayyar*), artist, like the blessed Holy One: consummate artist, designing and fashioning image within image,[541] perfecting that image in all its array, inserting supernal soul resembling the supernal array.[542] So there is no artist but the blessed Holy One.

"Come and see from human seed: When desire arouses toward his female, and his female arouses toward him, the two of them join as one and from them issues a single son, blending two images as one, for the blessed Holy One designs him in a pattern embracing them both. Therefore one should sanctify himself at that time, so the image will appear in consummate design, fittingly."[543]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "Come and see how magnificent are the deeds of the blessed Holy One! For the artistry and design of a human being resemble the world,[544] and every single day the blessed Holy One creates worlds, coupling couples, each one fittingly.[545] He designs their images before they enter the world.[546]

"Come and see: Rabbi Shim'on said, '*This is the book of the generations of Adam* (Genesis 5:1). Was there really a book? Rather they have established that the blessed Holy

One showed Adam every generation with its expounders…'[547]

"How did He reveal them? You might say he saw through Holy Spirit that they were destined to enter the world, like someone forseeing the future through wisdom. Not so! Rather he saw them all with his very eyes, witnessing the image in which all were destined to abide in the world. How could that be? Because since the day the world was created, all those souls destined to abide in human beings stand in the presence of the blessed Holy One in the actual image they are destined to assume [91a] in the world.[548]

"Similarly, after all the righteous depart from this world, their souls all ascend; and the blessed Holy One prepares for them another image in which to be clothed, resembling how they were in this world.[549] So they all stand in His presence, and Adam saw them with his own eyes.

"Now, you might say 'After he saw them they ceased to exist.' Come and see: All entities of the blessed Holy One exist, standing in His presence until descending to the world. Similarly it is written: *but with the one who is here…* (Deuteronomy 29:14).[550] They have already established that all human beings destined to exist in the world were present there.[551] Here one should contemplate, for it is written: *and with the one who is not here* (ibid.), implying all those who would issue from those standing there, for it is written: *with us today*, not: *standing with us today*.[552] But actually all of them stood there, invisibly. So it is written: *with us today*, though they could not be seen.

"Now, you might say 'Why were they not seen here as they were seen by Adam, who saw them eye-to-eye[553]—seeing that here was even more suitable?'[554] Because here, when Torah was given to Israel, they saw a different sight and supernal rungs,[555] gazing eye-to-eye, yearning to contemplate the glory of their Lord. So they saw the

supernal glory of the blessed Holy One alone, nothing else.[556]

"So all human beings destined to exist in the world stand in the presence of the blessed Holy One in the actual image they will one day assume, as is written: *Your eyes saw my unfinished body; in Your book they were all recorded* (Psalms 139:16). *Your eyes saw my unfinished body*. How so? Because another, supernal image resembles this.[557] So it is written: *Who is* צור (*tsur*), *a rock, except our God?* Who צייר (*tsayyeir*), designs, human images like the blessed Holy One?[558]

"Alternatively, *For who is* אל (*El*), *God…?*[559] Mystery of the word, for *El* constitutes totality, comprised of all those rungs.[560] Now, you might say 'Look, *El* is a different rung, since it is written: *El rages every day* (ibid. 7:12)!'[561] Come and see that *El* does not exist *apart from YHVH*, for He is not alone, never separated.[562] So, *Who is El apart from YHVH?*

"*Who is a rock except our God?* For *rock* is not alone,[563] but rather all is one, as is written: *Know today and take to heart that* יהוה (*YHVH*) *is* האלהים (*ha-Elohim*), *God…* (Deuteronomy 4:39).[564]

"Come and see: Before Abraham was circumcised, He spoke with him only through a vision, as we have said, for it is written: *The word of YHVH came to Abram in* מחזה (*maḥazeh*), *a vision*…(Genesis 15:1).[565] *In maḥazeh*—in that חיזו (*ḥeizu*), mirror: a rung in which all images appear, as has been said.[566] This *maḥazeh* is mystery of covenant.[567]

"Now, you might say 'It is called *maḥazeh* because it is a mirror rung in which all images appear. Previously you said that until Abraham was circumcised, this rung alone spoke with him—no other rungs resting there. Yet now you say: "*In maḥazeh—ḥeizu*, mirror, of all rungs." Well, before he was circumcised it is written: *The word of YHVH came to Abram in maḥazeh*!'[568]

"However, this rung is indeed the mirror of all supernal rungs, and by reflecting those rungs it is arrayed. Even

though at that time Abraham was not circumcised, this rung mirrored supernal rungs, abiding in all those colors, the spectrum of those colors displayed below: one on the right—white; one on the left—red; one blended of all colors, reflecting supernal colors abiding above.[569]

"So in this mirror He stood over Abraham, speaking with him, although he was not circumcised.[570] Once he was circumcised, what is written? *YHVH appeared to Abram* (ibid. 17:1).[571]

"Come and see: Balaam said, 'מחזה (*maḥazeh*), *vision of, Shaddai*' (Numbers 24:4),[572] and of Abraham is written simply *maḥazeh*—unspecified. What is the difference between them? *Maḥazeh Shaddai*—those below, issuing from it, its reflection.[573] *Maḥazeh*, unspecified—ה (*he*), in whom are reflected all supernal images.[574] So of Abraham is written simply *maḥazeh*, and of Balaam *maḥazeh Shaddai*.

"So until Abraham was circumcised, he possessed this rung, as we have said. Once he was circumcised, immediately, *YHVH appeared to Abram*—all those other rungs appeared [91b] upon this rung, which spoke with him fittingly, consummately. Abraham was linked from rung to rung, entering the sacred sealed covenant fittingly, consummately.

"Come and see: Once Abraham was circumcised, he abandoned the foreskin[575] and entered the sacred covenant, crowned with the sacred corona,[576] entering the covenant upon which the world stands.[577] Then the world was erected for his sake, as is written: *Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth* (Jeremiah 33:25).[578] Similarly: *These are the generations of heaven and earth* בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created* (Genesis 2:4)—בה׳ בראם (*be-he bera'am*), With *he* He created them; באברהם (*be-Avraham*), through Abraham. All abides in a single mystery.[579]

"When the blessed Holy One showed Adam all those generations of the world, he saw each and every one, each

and every generation standing in the Garden of Eden in the image they were destined to assume in this world.[580] Come and see, as has been said: When he saw David totally devoid of life, he felt distressed and gave him 70 years of his own. So Adam had 930 years, and those 70 were reserved for David.[581] This matter is a mystery of wisdom, for David possesses only 70 years from Primordial Adam.[582] All is a mystery of wisdom: everything below inheres in mystery above.

"Come and see: All those images of souls destined for the world stand before Him in couples.[583] Later, when they arrive in this world, the blessed Holy One matches couples."[584]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "The blessed Holy One matches couples, proclaiming: 'The daughter of so-and-so for so-and-so!'"[585]

Rabbi Yose said, "How can you make such an assertion? Look at what is written: *There is nothing new under the sun* (Ecclesiastes 1:9)!"[586]

Rabbi Yehudah replied, "The verse reads: *under the sun*. It is different above!"[587]

Rabbi Yose said, "Why a proclamation here? Didn't Rabbi Ḥizkiyah say in the name of Rabbi Ḥiyya: 'At the very moment a human being issues into the world, his mate is destined for him'?"[588]

Rabbi Abba said, "Happy are the righteous whose souls are hidden away with the Holy King before they come into the world! For so we have learned: At the moment the blessed Holy One brings forth souls into the world, all those spirits and souls comprise male and female joined as one.[589] They are transmitted into the hands of the emissary appointed over human conception.[590] As they descend and are entrusted to him, they separate—sometimes one preceding the other[591]—and he deposits them in human beings. When the time of their coupling arrives, the blessed Holy One, who knows those spirits and souls, unites them as

at first and issues a proclamation. When they unite they become a single body, a single soul, right and left,[592] fittingly. So, *There is nothing new under the sun*.[593]

"Now, you might say 'But we have learned: "Coupling accords only with a person's conduct."'[594] So it is! For if he is virtuous and his actions seemly, then he attains his—uniting as when issuing."[595]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "Where should one whose acts are seemly search for his mate?"

He replied, "We have learned: 'A man should always sell everything he owns and marry the daughter of a scholar,'[596] for in the hands of a scholar are deposited treasures of his Lord.

"It has been taught in the mystery of the Mishnah:[597] 'All those arriving through cycling of souls[598] can anticipate their mates by supplication.' Concerning this our Companions aroused: 'Lest another anticipate him by supplication.'[599] Well spoken: 'another,' precisely![600] So coupling is difficult for the blessed Holy One,[601] but still, *the ways of* YHVH *are right*…(Hosea 14:10)."[602]

Rabbi Yehudah sent a question to Rabbi El'azar: "I know the mystery of the matter, but those who arrive through cycling of souls—where do they find their mates?"

He sent back to him: "It is written: *How can we provide wives for those who remain*? (Judges 21:7).[603] And then: *Seize for yourselves*…(ibid., 21).[604] The episode of the Benjaminites demonstrates this.[605] Therefore we have learned: 'lest another anticipate him by supplication.'" [92a]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "Now truly, coupling is difficult for the blessed Holy One! Happy is the share of Israel, whom Torah teaches the ways of the blessed Holy One and all the treasures hidden away with Him! Truly it is written: *The Torah of* YHVH *is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of* YHVH *are sure, making wise the simple*…(Psalms 19:8).

Happy is the share of one who engages in Torah, not parting from her, for whoever parts from Torah for a moment is like one who parts from eternal life, as is written: *She is your life and the length of your days* (Deuteronomy 30:20),[606] and similarly: *They will bestow on you length of days, years of life and peace* (Proverbs 3:2)."[607]

Rabbi Yose opened, "*Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever —sprout of My planting, work of My hands, that I may be glorified* (Isaiah 60:21).[609] Happy are Israel above all other nations, for the blessed Holy One has called them *righteous*! For it has been taught: 8125 winged creatures[610] roam the world and, hearing a voice, they seize it, as we have learned: There is nothing in the world without a voice, sailing through the sky, seized by winged creatures who raise that voice to masters of requital who judge it for good or ill,[611] as is written: *For a bird of heaven will carry the voice*…(Ecclesiastes 10:20)."[612]

When Abram was ninety-nine years old [YHVH *appeared to Abram*]…(Genesis 17:1).[608]

When do they judge that voice? Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "When a person is lying asleep, and his soul leaves him and testifies regarding him. Then that voice is judged, as is written: *From her who lies in your bosom guard the doors of your mouth* (Micah 7:5). Why? Because she testifies."[613]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "Whatever one does each day, his soul attests at night."

It has been taught: Rabbi El'azar said, "At the onset of the first hour,[614] as day expires[615] and the sun sinks, the keeper of keys appointed over the sun[616] enters the twelve gates open during the day.[617] After entering all of them, all those gates are shut. A herald rises and begins to proclaim; one who rises rises, grasping those keys. Once the herald has finished, all those guardians of the world[618] gather and

ascend, no one opening an orifice, all subsiding. Then chastisers below arouse, roaming the world; the moon begins to shine; trumpeters blow and wail. At the second trumpeting, they arouse song, chanting before their Lord.[619] Countless shield-bearing warriors stand erect, and chastisements arouse in the world. Then while human beings sleep, the soul goes forth, offers testimony, and is found guilty.[620] But the blessed Holy One acts lovingly with that person, and the soul returns to her site.[621]

"At midnight, when birds arouse, the side of the North arouses in a wind.[622] A scepter from the side of the South rises erect and strikes that wind, so it subsides, turning fragrant.[623] Then the blessed Holy One arouses, following His custom, to delight with the righteous in the Garden of Eden. At that moment, happy is the share of the human being who rises to delight in Torah,[624] for the blessed Holy One and all the righteous in the Garden of Eden listen to his voice, as is written: *You who dwell in the gardens, companions listen for your voice; let me hear!* (Song of Songs 8:13).[625] Further, the blessed Holy One emanates upon him a thread of grace, protecting him throughout the world, for higher and lower beings guard him, as is written: *By day YHVH directs His grace, at night His song is with me* (Psalms 42:9)."[626]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, "Certainly whoever engages in this shares constantly in the world that is coming."

Rabbi Yose asked, "What do you mean, 'constantly'?"[627]

He replied, "So we have learned: Every midnight, when the blessed Holy One arouses in the Garden of Eden, all the plants of the Garden are watered profusely by the stream called [92b] Stream of Antiquity, Stream of Delights, never ceasing.[628] If one rises and engages in Torah, then that stream, gushes upon his head, as it were, saturating him among those plants of the Garden of Eden."

Rabbi Yose said, "Since all those righteous in the Garden listen to him, he shares in the saturation of that

stream; in consequence, he shares constantly in the world that is coming."[629]

Rabbi Abba was traveling from Tiberias to his father-in-law's castle,[630] accompanied by Rabbi Ya'akov son of Rav. They came upon Clod Village.[631] As they were about to lie down, Rabbi Abba asked, "Is there a rooster here?"

The host said, "Why?"

He replied, "I want to rise at midnight."[632]

He said, "I don't need one, because look—I have a signal[633] in the house: this weighted water clock[634] in front of the bed! I fill it with water, which drips drop by drop. Precisely at midnight, all that water empties out, and this cogwheel spins and clangs[635]—its noise is heard throughout the house. Then it's midnight precisely! I had an old man who used to rise every midnight and engage in Torah, so he built this."

Rabbi Abba said, "Blessed is the Compassionate One who sent me here!"

At midnight that cogwheel clanged. Rabbi Abba and Rabbi Ya'akov arose. They heard that man, sitting in the recesses of the house together with his two sons and saying, "It is written: *Midnight I rise to praise You for Your righteous judgments* (Psalms 119:62). What prompted David to say *Midnight*, rather than *At midnight?* But *Midnight*, literally! This he exclaimed to the blessed Holy One.[636] Now, is the blessed Holy One called that? Yes, because at precisely *midnight*, the blessed Holy One manifests together with His retinue: that is the moment He enters the Garden of Eden to delight with the righteous."

Rabbi Abba said, "Let us certainly join *Shekhinah* and unite as one!"[637]

They approached and sat down with him. They said, "Utter the word of your mouth, for you speak well! From where did you derive this?"

He replied, “I learned this word from my grandfather. He also used to say that at the opening of the first hour of night all chastisers below arouse, roaming the world. Precisely at midnight, the blessed Holy One arouses in the Garden of Eden, and chastisers below are nowhere to be found. All supernal nocturnal conduct[638] manifests only at midnight. How do we know? From Abraham, as is written: *The night was divided for them* (Genesis 14:15).[639] Similarly in Egypt: *Now it was in the middle of the night* (Exodus 12:29);[640] and so it is found frequently in Torah.[641]

“David knew.[642] What did he know? As the old man said: that his kingship depended on this.[643] So he rose at that hour and chanted songs, calling the blessed Holy One *Midnight*, literally![644] *I rise to praise You for Your righteous judgments*, for all judgments derive from here, judgments of *Malkhut* (“Kingdom”) manifest from here.[645] That hour linked with David, so he rose and chanted songs.”

Rabbi Abba came and kissed him. He said, “Certainly so! Blessed is the Compassionate One who sent me here!

“Come and see: Night entails judgment universally, as we have already established. Certainly so, as aroused in the presence of Rabbi Shim’on!”

The child, son of that man, asked, “If so, why is it written: *Midnight?*”[646]

He replied, “As has been said, at midnight Kingdom of Heaven[647] arouses.”

He said, “I have heard a word.”

He said, “Speak, my son! May dazzling topaz[648] from your mouth resound like a spark!”[649]

He said, “I too have heard that night is royal judgment,[650] entailing judgment universally, but his exclamation of *Midnight* derives from its absorbing two modes: judgment and love.[651] Certainly, half is judgment—for during the other half, Her face radiates from the aspect of love. Therefore it is written: *Midnight*.”[652]

Rabbi Abba rose, placed his hands on his head and blessed him, saying, “I really thought that wisdom manifests only in the righteous, deserving of it. Now I see that even children in the generation of Rabbi Shim’on are worthy of wisdom! Happy are you, Rabbi Shim’on! Woe to the generation from whom you depart!”[653]

They sat until [93a] morning, engaging in Torah.

Rabbi Abba opened, saying, “*Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever—sprout of My planting, work of My hands, that I may be glorified* (Isaiah 60:21). This word has already been established by the Companions.[654] Why is it written: *Your people, all of them righteous*? Are all of Israel righteous? Look at all the guilty ones among Israel, all the sinners, all the wicked who transgress the words of Torah! But so it has been taught in the mystery of our Mishnah:[655] Happy are Israel who bring a favorable offering to the blessed Holy One, offering up their sons on the eighth day.[656] When they are circumcised, they enter this fine share of the blessed Holy One, as is written: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world* (Proverbs 10:25).[657] Having entered this share of the Righteous One, they are called *righteous*—truly, *all of them righteous*! So, *they will inherit the land forever*, as is written: *Open for me gates of righteousness.... through which the righteous will enter* (Psalms 118:19–20).[658] Those who have been circumcised are called *righteous*.

“*Sprout of My planting*—sprout of those plants planted by the blessed Holy One in the Garden of Eden,[659] this *land* being one of them. So Israel has a share in the world that is coming, and it is written: *The righteous will inherit the land* (ibid. 37:29).[660] *They will inherit the land* לעולם (*le-olam*), *forever*. What does *le-olam* mean? As we have established in our Mishnah. This word has already been discussed among the Companions.[661]

“It has been taught: What prompted Scripture not to call him Abraham until now?[662] So we have established:

Until now, he was not circumcised; once he was, he entered this ה (*he*), and *Shekhinah* inhered in him. Then he was called אברהם (*Avraham*), Abraham,[663] corresponding with what is written: *These are the generations of heaven and earth* בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created* (Genesis 2:4)—it has been taught: בה׳ בראם (*be-he bera'am*), With *he* He created them; and it has also been taught: באברהם (*be-Avraham*), through Abraham.[664] What are they arguing about? One is *Ḥesed;* the other, *Shekhinah*.[665] All descends as one; the word poses no contradiction, being this and that."[666]

Rabbi Ya'akov said to Rabbi Abba, "This ה (*he*) of בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*, is small, while the ה (*he*) of הליהוה (*ha-le-YHVH*), *Is* [*this how you repay*] *YHVH*? (Deuteronomy 32:6), is large.[667] What is the difference between them?"

He replied, "One is Sabbatical; the other, Jubilee.[668] Some teach that all is one,[669] for when She radiates from Righteous One, She stands full and ה (*he*) is large, for She is illumined fittingly,[670] but when She does not stand full and sucks from the Other Side, then ה (*he*) is small.[671] So sometimes the moon stands full and sometimes defective, as discovered and perceived in her face.[672] All is fine. Both this and that are lucidity of the word!"[673]

Rabbi Abba said, "Happy are Israel, for the blessed Holy One delights in them above all other nations and has granted them this sign of the covenant! Whoever bears this sign does not descend to Hell[674] if he preserves it properly —not inserting it into a foreign domain[675] or betraying the name of the King.[676] For betraying this is tantamount to betraying the name of the blessed Holy One, as is written: *They betrayed YHVH because they bore alien children* (Hosea 5:7)."

Rabbi Abba said further, "When a person brings out his son to initiate him into this covenant, the blessed Holy One calls to His retinue, saying, 'See what a creature I have

made in the world!’ At that moment Elijah (of blessed memory) is summoned, sweeping through the world in four glides,[677] manifesting there. So we have learned that one must prepare another chair in honor of him.[678] Then he ascends and testifies in the presence of the blessed Holy One.

“Come and see! At first is written: *What are you doing here, Elijah*? (1 Kings 19:9), and: *I have been very zealous for YHVH, for the Children of Israel have abandoned Your covenant* (ibid., 10). He said to him, ‘By your life! At every site of circumcision you will appear, and the mouth that testified this will testify that Israel are fulfilling the covenant.’[679] We have already learned: Why was Elijah punished in the presence of the blessed Holy One? Because he slandered His children.”[680]

Meanwhile daylight appeared, and they were still speaking words of Torah.[681] They rose to go.

That man said to them, “Why don’t you complete what you were engaged in this night?”

They asked, “What is that?”

He said to them, “Tomorrow you can see the face of the Master of Covenant![682] For my wife asks this favor of you, and the circumcision of covenant of the son born to me—tomorrow will be his wedding celebration!”[683]

Rabbi Abba said, “A request for a *mitsvah!* And to see the face of *Shekhinah!* Let us sit.”

They lingered the whole day. [93b] That night the man gathered all his close friends; all night long they engaged in Torah, and none of them slept.[684] The man said to them, “Please, let each one speak a new word of Torah!”

One opened, saying “בפרוע פרעות (*Biphro’a pera’ot*), *When uncoverings are uncovered, in Israel; when the people willingly offer themselves—bless YHVH!* (Judges 5:2).[685] What prompted Deborah and Barak to open with this verse?[686] We have learned: The world is erected only upon this

covenant, as is written: *Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth* (Jeremiah 33:25),[687] for upon this heaven and earth stand. So as long as Israel fulfills this covenant, the norms of heaven and earth endure; but whenever—perish the thought!—Israel nullifies this covenant, heaven and earth no longer endure, and blessings vanish from the world.

"Come and see: Other nations dominated Israel only when they nullified this covenant. What did they nullify? They failed to uncover and remained unrevealed.[688] So it is written: *The Children of Israel abandoned YHVH, so He delivered them into the hand of Sisera…* (1 Samuel 12:9).[689] *They abandoned YHVH*, literally![690] Until Deborah appeared, inspiring all of Israel to offer themselves for this, whereupon their enemies were subdued. Correspondingly we have learned: The blessed Holy One said to Joshua, 'Israel are obstructed—still covered, My covenant unrevealed—and you want to bring them into the land and subdue their enemies? *Circumcise the Children of Israel again, a second time!* (Joshua 5:2).'[691] Until they were uncovered—this covenant revealed—they did not enter the land, nor were their enemies subdued.[692] Similarly here: once Israel willingly offered themselves for this sign, their enemies were subdued and blessings restored to the world, as is written: *When uncoverings are uncovered in Israel; when the people willingly offer themselves—bless YHVH!*"

Another rose and opened, saying, "At *an encampment on the way, YHVH encountered him and sought to kill him* (Exodus 4:24).[693] To kill whom? Moses.[694] The blessed Holy One said to him, 'Are you going to bring forth Israel and subdue a great king and ruler, when you have cast off My covenant? For your son is uncircumcised!' Immediately *He sought to kill him*.

"It has been taught: Gabriel descended in a flame of fire to burn him and assumed the guise of a fiery serpent to

swallow him up.[695] Why a serpent? The blessed Holy One said to him, 'You are going to kill a great and mighty serpent,[696] and your son is uncircumcised?' Immediately he assumed the guise of a serpent to kill him. But Zipporah saw and circumcised her son, and he was saved,[697] as is written: *Zipporah took* צור (*tsor*), *a flint* (Exodus 4:25).[698] What is *tsor?* Healing.[699] What was the healing? *She cut off her son's foreskin*, for Holy Spirit sparkled within her."[700]

Another rose and said, "*Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me!' They came close, and he said*, ['*I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt!'*] (Genesis 45:4). Now, why did he call them, since they were already close to him? Because when he said *I am Joseph your brother*, they were stunned, seeing his supreme royalty. Joseph said, 'I attained this because of this! *Come close to me!'* When they came close he showed them the covenant of circumcision,[701] saying, 'This brought me this royalty because I preserved it.'[702]

"From here we learn that whoever preserves this sign of covenant is destined for royalty.[703] How do we know? From Boaz, as is written: *As YHVH lives! Lie down until morning* (Ruth 3:13), for his impulse incited him until finally he swore an oath and preserved this covenant.[704] So he deserved to become progenitor of kings ruling all other kings[705] and of King Messiah—called by the name of the blessed Holy One."[706]

Another opened, saying, "It is written: *If an army besieges me, my heart will not fear; if war besets me*, בזאת (*be-zot*), *in this, I trust* (Psalms 27:3). So it has been taught: What is *be-zot*? Sign of the covenant, always accessible to a man,[707] intimating above.[708] So it is said: *be-zot, in this*, as is written: *Zot, This, is the sign of the covenant* (Genesis 9:12); *Zot, This, is My covenant* (ibid. 17:10)—all on one rung.[709] It has also

been taught: זה (*Zeh*), This, and זאת (*zot*), this, occupy one rung inseparably.[710]

"Now, you might say 'If so, everyone else in the world is similar. Why David alone and no one else?'[711] Because She is linked to him, intimated by him, crown of kingdom.[712]

"Come and see: Since King David did not preserve this *zot* properly,[713] kingdom [94a] withdrew from him all that time.[714] So we have learned: This *zot* intimates Kingdom above and Jerusalem, the holy city. The moment David violated Her, a voice issued, declaring: 'David, from that with which you were bonded you will be detached! You are banished from Jerusalem, divested of kingship!' So it was: he was punished by what he had violated.[715] If this is what happened to King David, how much more so with everyone else in the world!"

Another opened, saying, "*Unless YHVH had been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt with Dumah* (Psalms 94:17). It has been taught: What entitles Israel not to descend to Hell like other nations, nor to be delivered into the hands of Dumah?[716] This sign.[717] For so it has been taught: When a person leaves this world, numerous bands of dazzling demons[718] are assigned to him. When they raise their eyes and see this sign—covenant of holiness—they scatter, and he is not handed over to Dumah to descend to Hell,[719] for whoever is delivered into his hands undoubtedly descends to Hell.

"Upper and lower beings fear this sign. Baneful chastisers are powerless against a man if he succeeds in preserving this sign, for he is linked with the name of the blessed Holy One.[720]

"As soon as King David was divested of kingship and banished from Jerusalem, he became frightened, thinking that he would be lowered into the hands of Dumah and die in that world, until he was assured: *YHVH has removed your sin; you will not die* (2 Samuel 12:13). That very moment,

he opened, saying, *Unless YHVH had been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt with Dumah*.

Another opened, saying, "What is this that David said: *He will show me* אותו (*Oto*), *Himself, and His abode* (ibid. 15:25)?[721] Why, *He will show me Himself*, and then: *His abode*? Who can see the blessed Holy One? But so we have learned: When that punishment was decreed against him, and he realized that for not preserving this sign properly he was being punished this way,[722] no longer called righteous[723]—for all is linked as one, all intimated by this sign—he pleaded: *'Show me oto!'* What is *oto?* 'Sign' of the holy covenant.[724] 'For I fear that it has disappeared from me.' Why? For these two—Kingdom and Jerusalem—are linked with this.[725] So he affixed to his plea *oto and its abode*, so that Kingdom of this 'sign' would be restored to its site.[726] All is one entity!"

Another opened, saying, "*From my flesh I will see God* (Job 19:26). Why *from my flesh?* The verse should read: *from my being*.[727] However, *from my flesh*, literally![728] What is that? As is written: *The flesh of holiness passes away from you* (Jeremiah 11:15), and similarly: *My covenant will be in your flesh* (Genesis 17:13).[729] For it has been taught: As long as a person is inscribed with the holy inscription of this sign, through it he sees the blessed Holy One, literally, and a sacred soul unites with him.[730] If he is unworthy, not having preserved this sign,[731] what is written? *They lose the soul of God* (Job 4:9), for the inscription of the blessed Holy One[732] has not been preserved. If he proves worthy, preserving it, then *Shekhinah* does not part from him. When is She ingrained in him? When he is married,[733] and this sign enters its site.[734] For it has been taught: Why do ו׳ ה׳ (*vav*, *he*) go together?[735] Because one is male and one is female,[736] joined together, called one name. Then supernal *Ḥesed* rests upon them. Where does it rest? On the side of the male.

Who is *Ḥesed*? אל (*El*), God, flowing forth from supernal Wisdom,[737] crowned by male, so female is rendered fragrant.[738]

"We have further learned: אלוה (*Eloah*), *God*, is: אל (*El*), God, radiance of Wisdom; ו (*vav*), male; ה (*he*), female—joined together, called אלוה (*Eloah*).[739] Sacred soul is linked to this site, and all depends on this sign, so it is written: *From my flesh I will see* אלוה (*Eloah*), *God*, consummation of all—*from my flesh*, literally; from this sign, precisely! So, happy are Israel—holy ones linked to the blessed Holy One! Happy are they in this world and in the world that is coming! Of them is written: *You, cleaving to YHVH your God, are alive every one of you today!* (Deuteronomy 4:4)."

Rabbi Abba said, "Since you are so wise, why are you dwelling here?"[740]

They replied, "If a sparrow or swallow is uprooted from its place, [94b] it doesn't know where to fly, as is written: *Like a sparrow wandering from her nest is a man wandering from his place* (Proverbs 27:8). This place has refined us for Torah! Our custom every night is half sleeping and half Torah. When we rise in the morning, fragrances of fields and glistening rivers enlighten us with Torah, which is embedded in our minds.[741]

"This place was once condemned above, and numerous shield-bearing officers were eliminated in punishment for the crime of Torah.[742] So we strive day and night in Torah, and this place helps us. Whoever departs from here is like one who departs from eternal life."[743]

Rabbi Abba raised his hands and blessed them. They sat until the day shone. Once day shone, they said to the tender children sitting in front of them, "Go out and see! Then let each one say a new word for this distinguished man."

They went out and saw that day had already shone. One of them said, "This day fire is destined from above!"

Another said, "And in a certain house!"

Another said, “There is a certain old man here destined today to be burned by this fire!”

Rabbi Abba said, “May the Compassionate One save us!” Astonished, he could not speak.

He said, “Ordained smoke grasped on earth!”[744]

So it was, for that day the Companions saw the face of *Shekhinah* and were encompassed by fire.[745] Rabbi Abba’s face blazed in fire from rapture of Torah.[746]

It has been taught: All that day, none of them left the house, and the house was swathed in smoke.[747] Words among them were fresh and ecstatic as if they were receiving Torah that very day from Mount Sinai![748] When they departed they did not know if it was day or night.[749]

Rabbi Abba said, “As long as we abide, let each of us say a word of wisdom, rendering gratitude to the master of the house, master of the wedding celebration!”[750]

One opened, saying, *“Happy is the one You choose and draw near to dwell in Your courts! May we be sated with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple* (Psalms 65:5). First, *Your courts*; then, *Your house*; then, *Your temple*—one within the other, one above the other.[751]

“First, *to dwell in Your courts*, as is said: *Whoever is left in Zion, who remains in Jerusalem, will be called holy* (Isaiah 4:3).[752]

“Then, *May we be sated with the goodness of Your house*, as is said: *By wisdom a house is built* (Proverbs 24:3).[753] It is not written: *Wisdom is built as a house*, for that would imply that Wisdom is called *house*. Rather, it is written: *By wisdom a house is built*, corresponding to what is written: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden* (Genesis 2:10).[754]

“Then, *Your holy temple*—consummation of all, for so we have learned: What is היכל (*heikhal*), *temple*? כל ׳י ׳ה (*He yod kol*), this and that, ‘all’ consummated as one.[755]

"What is demonstrated by the beginning of the verse: *Happy is the one You choose and draw near to dwell in Your courts?* When a person brings his son as an offering before the blessed Holy One,[756] His desire focuses on that offering. He desires him,[757] drawing him near, accommodating him in two chambers[758]—both of which he possesses[759]—for those two are joined as one, as is written: *to dwell in Your courts—courts*, precisely: two.

"So when the ancient *hasidim*—elders of this place[760]—brought their sons for this offering, they would open by proclaiming: *'Happy is the one You choose and draw near to dwell in Your courts!'*[761] Those standing by him[762] responded, *'May we be sated with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple.'* Then he would say,[763] 'who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to initiate him into the covenant of our father Abraham.'[764] Those standing by him responded, 'As you have initiated him into the covenant…'[765]

"We have learned: First, a person should pray for himself, then for another,[766] as is written: *He will make atonement for himself and for his household and for the whole congregation of Israel* (Leviticus 16:17)—*he will make atonement for himself*, first; then, *for the whole congregation of Israel*.[767] We ourselves have adopted this custom,[768] it seems so fine to us."

Rabbi Abba said, "Certainly so! How fitting! Whoever fails to recite this excludes himself from ten canopies that the blessed Holy One intends to erect for the righteous in the world that is coming,[769] all tied to this;[770] so ten words of faith appear in this verse: *Happy is the one You choose and draw near*….[771] Out of every single word one canopy is constructed.

"Happy is your share in this world and in the world that is coming! For Torah is bound to your hearts as if you yourselves stood [95a] at Mount Sinai when Torah was given to Israel."[772]

Another opened, saying, "*Make an altar of earth for Me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. Wherever I record My name I will come to you and bless you* (Exodus 20:21). It has been taught: Whoever brings his son as this offering is regarded as if he brought all the offerings of the world before the blessed Holy One, and as if he built a perfect altar before Him.[773] So one should arrange an altar in a vessel filled with earth, circumcising this holy covenant over it.[774] Then he is regarded before the blessed Holy One as if he sacrificed burnt offerings and sacrifices, sheep and oxen; this pleases Him more than all of them, as is written: *Sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. Wherever I record My name I will come to you and bless you*. What does this mean: *I record My name*? Circumcision,[775] of which is written: *The secret of YHVH is for those in awe of Him; to them He reveals His covenant* (Psalms 25:14).[776]

"This *altar of earth* is certainly as I have said. What is written next? *If you make an altar of stones for Me* (Exodus, ibid., 22),[777] alluding to a convert converting from a stiff-necked, hard-hearted people, called *altar of stones*.

"*Do not build it hewn* (ibid.). What is that? One must introduce him to worshiping the blessed Holy One[778] so that he will forget the alien worship he practiced until now and eliminate his hardheartedness. For if he is circumcised without eliminating that hardness, so as to enter holy worship, then he resembles a stone idol—hewn on this side and on that, but still stone as before. So, *do not build it hewn*, retaining its hardness, for if so, *by wielding your tool upon it you defile it* (ibid.): that circumcision does him no good.

"So, happy is the share of one who brings this offering before the blessed Holy One in joy! One should rejoice in this share[779] every day, as is written: *Let all who take*

refuge in You rejoice, ever jubilant as You shelter them. Let those who love Your name exult in You (Psalms 5:12)."

Another opened, saying, "*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, YHVH appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am El Shaddai.*[780] *Walk in My presence and be perfect'* (Genesis 17:1). One should examine this verse. *When Abram was ninety-nine years*—this is difficult in several ways. Hadn't the blessed Holy One revealed Himself to him before? Did *YHVH appear to Abram* only now, when he had attained this age, and not previously? Isn't it written: *YHVH said to Abram; YHVH said to Abram; He said to Abram, 'Know for certain'* (ibid. 12:1; 13:14; 15:13)? Yet now Scripture enumerates his days, following which is written: *YHVH appeared to Abram*, implying that until now He had not revealed Himself to him.

"Further, it is written: בן תשעים שנה ותשע שנים (*ben tish'im shanah ve-tesha shanim*), *ninety year and nine years old*—first, שנה (*shanah*), *year*, and then שנים (*shanim*), *years*.[781]

"But so it has been taught: During all those years *appeared* is not written.[782] Why? Because since he was obstructed and concealed,[783] the blessed Holy One did not reveal Himself to him fittingly.[784] Now He did, so it is written: *appeared*. Why? Because He was about to expose in him this sign, the holy crown,[785] and He was also about to generate from him holy seed, which could not be holy if his flesh was obstructed.[786] He said, 'Now that he is ninety-nine years old, and the time draws near for holy seed to issue, let him be holy first, then holy seed will issue from him.' So Scripture enumerates his days here, not on all those previous occasions.

"Further, *tish'im shanah, ninety year*, for all his previous years were not *shanim, years*, but rather like one *shanah, year*, for his days were not days.[787] Now that he arrived here, they were *years*, not a *year*.[788]

"*He said to him: 'I am El Shaddai*.' What is implied by the fact that until now He did not say, '*I am El Shaddai*'? So it has been taught: The blessed Holy One made lower crowns, unholy, below;[789] and all those who are uncircumcised are defiled by them, marked by them. How are they marked? By the appearance of the letters ד׳ ש׳ (*shin, dalet*)—nothing more[790]—so they are defiled by them and cling to them. Once they have been circumcised, they escape from these and enter under the wings of *Shekhinah*.[791] The holy mark י (*yod*) is revealed in them—sign of the perfect covenant—[95b] so שדי (*Shaddai*) is inscribed in them, completely fulfilled.[792] So here is written: '*I am El Shaddai. Walk in My presence and be perfect*—complete. For now you are defective, inscribed with ד׳ ש׳ (*shin dalet*). Circumcise yourself and become complete with the inscription of שדי (*Shaddai*).'

"Whoever possesses this inscription is worthy of being blessed by this name, as is written: *El Shaddai will bless you* (ibid. 28:3). Who is *El Shaddai*? The one from whom blessings issue, the one ruling over all lower crowns;[793] dreading him, all are thwarted and tremble. So all unholy beings shun one who is circumcised and are powerless against him. Furthermore, he does not descend to Hell,[794] as is written: *Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever* (Isaiah 60:21). All those who are circumcised are called *righteous*, so *they will inherit the land forever*, for only one called *righteous* inherits this *land*.[795] Similarly here: *Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever.*"

Rabbi Abba said, "Happy are you in this world and in the world that is coming! Happy is my share, that I came to hear these words from your mouths! All of you are holy, all sons of the Holy King! Of you is written: *This one will say, 'I am YHVH's'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; another will write on his hand, 'YHVH's,' and adopt the name of Israel* (Isaiah 44:5).[796] Each and every one of you is

linked and joined to the supernal holy King. You are ordained princes, shield-bearing warriors of that land called Land of the Living,[797] whose princes feast on manna of holy dew."[798]

He opened, saying, *"Happy are you, O land whose king is a son of free ones and whose princes feast at the proper time!* (Ecclesiastes 10:17). And it is written: *Woe to you, O land whose king is a child and whose princes feast in the morning!* (ibid., 16). These verses are contradictory—yet not. *Happy are you, O land* alludes to the supernal land, regulating all supernal life, therefore called Land of the Living.[799] Of Her is written: *a land that YHVH your God looks after* (Deuteronomy 11:12),[800] and similarly: *a land where you will eat bread without scarcity, where you will not lack anything* (ibid. 8:9)—*where you will not lack* כל (*kol*), *anything*, precisely![801] Why such abundance? Because *your king is a son of free ones*—the blessed Holy One, as is said: *My firstborn son is Israel* (Exodus 4:22).[802]

"*Son of free ones*—what is this? As is said: *It is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you* (Leviticus 25:12), and it is written: *Proclaim liberty throughout the land* (ibid., 10), for all freedom comes from Jubilee.[803] So, *son of freedom*.[804]

"Now, you might say 'It is written: *son of* חורין (*ḥorin*), *free ones*, not *son of* חירות (*ḥerut*), *freedom*.'[805] Certainly so! It should read: *son of herut*. But we have learned in our concealed Mishnah:[806] When י (*yod*) unites with ה (*he*), then this verse is fulfilled: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden* (Genesis 2:10).[807] Do not say: 'when they unite,' but rather: 'they unite,' literally![808] So it is written: *son of ḥorin, free ones*.[809] Consequently, *Happy are you, O land whose king is a son of free ones and whose princes feast at the proper time!*—in joy, plenitude, and pleasure.[810]

"*Woe to you, O land whose king is a child!*—this one below,[811] as has been taught: All other lands of other nations were granted to shield-bearing princes appointed over them.[812] Above them all, he of whom is written: *I was a*

child and now I am old (Psalms 37:25), and it has been taught: This verse was uttered by the Prince of the World.[813] So it is written: *Woe to you, O land whose king is a child!* Woe to the world, sucking from this side![814] And when Israel are in exile they suck like one who sucks from an alien power.[815]

"*And whose princes*[816] *feast in the morning*—not all day long; *in the morning*—not any other time of the day. For it has been taught: When the sun begins to shine and humans come to bow down to it, wrath looms over the world;[817] at the time of afternoon prayer wrath looms over the world.[818] Who causes this? *Whose king is a child*—that one called *child*.[819]

"But you, truly virtuous, holy ones of the Most High,[820] sons of the Holy King, do not suck from this side[821] but rather from that holy site above.[822] Of you is written: *You, cleaving to YHVH your God, are alive every one of you today!* (Deuteronomy 4:4)."

Rabbi Abba opened, saying, "*Let me sing for my beloved a song of my lover about his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a fertile slope. He enclosed it, cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines; he built a tower inside it and even hewed a winepress in it. He expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded stinking grapes* (Isaiah 5:1–2).

"These verses call for contemplation. Why is it written: *a song*? It should be called *rebuke*.[823]

"לִידִידִי (*Liydidi*), *For my beloved*—the word should be: לדודי (*le-dodi*), *for my lover*, as is written: שירת דודי (*shirat dodi*), *a song of my lover*.[824]

"*My beloved had a vineyard* בקרן בן שמן (*be-qeren ben shamen*), *on a fertile slope*. I have searched through the entire Torah and have not found a place called [96a] *Qeren Ben Shemen*![825]

"Now, the Companions have already established these verses in various nuances, all of which are fine and

accurate.[826] However, *Let me sing for my beloved*—Isaac, who was *beloved*, called *beloved* before issuing into the world.[827] Why *beloved*? As we have learned: The blessed Holy One felt immense love for him, for he was not created until Abraham his father was circumcised, called 'complete,' augmented by ה (*he*) for consummation.[828] Similarly, with Sarah: this ה (*he*) was bestowed upon her.[829]

"Here one should contemplate. For Sarah, ה (*he*) is appropriate, but for Abraham why ה (*he*) and not י (*yod*)? It should be י (*yod*), for he was male.[830] However, it is a supernal mystery concealed among us: Abraham ascended, obtaining a mystery from supernal ה (*he*), World of the Male.[831] Higher *he* and lower *he*—one dependent on male, the other female, indeed![832] So Abraham ascended with higher *he*, Sarah descended with lower *he*, for it is written: כה (*Koh*), *So, shall your seed be* (Genesis 15:5), and it has been taught: *your seed*—your seed literally, for he began entering this covenant, and whoever begins enters.[833] Consequently a convert who is circumcised is called 'convert of Righteousness,' for he does not issue from holy stock who have been circumcised.[834] So one entering this is called thus: Abraham.[835] Therefore it is written: *So shall your seed be—your seed*, literally! ה (*He*) was transmitted to him, and if *he* had not been transmitted to Sarah, then he would have had to engender below, as this *So* engenders below.[836] Once *he* was transmitted to Sarah, the two *he*'s joined as one, engendering above.[837] What issued from them is י (*yod*),[838] so *yod* is the first letter of יצחק (*Yitsḥaq*), Isaac—male.[839] From here the male begins to expand,[840] so it is written: *Because through Isaac seed will be named for you* (ibid. 21:12)—*through Isaac*, not through you.[841] Isaac engendered above, as is written: *You give truth to Jacob* (Micah 7:20). Jacob consummated all.[842]

"Now, you might ask 'Was Abraham linked here, no higher?[843] Look at what is written: *Ḥesed, loving-kindness, to Abraham* (ibid.)!'[844] That, indeed, is his share, because he

acted lovingly with the inhabitants of the world; but for engendering he was linked here—from here he began.[845] So Abraham was circumcised only at the age of ninety-nine;[846] the mystery of the matter is well known, established in our Mishnah.[847]

"Consequently Isaac—severe Judgment—issued to grasp his share, while for engendering he was called *Ḥesed*.[848] So Jacob consummated all, on this side and on that. Since Abraham and Isaac grasped their shares above,[849] he is consummation; since they were enabled to engender from below to above,[850] he is consummation. So it is written: *Israel in whom I glory* (Isaiah 49:3); in him blended colors from above and below.[851]

"So here appears *song*, as is written: *Let me sing for my beloved a song*—indeed![852] For he was called to engender male, called so before issuing into the world.[853]

"Some say as follows: *Let me sing for my beloved*—Abraham, as is said: *What is My beloved doing in My house?* (Jeremiah 11:15).[854] Abraham inherited this allotted share,[855] but as for what I said, that this refers to Isaac, so it is!

"*A song of my lover*—the blessed Holy One, who is called *my lover*, as is written: *This is my lover; my lover is radiant and ruddy* (Song of Songs 5:16, 10).[856] *My beloved* embraces *my lover*, male, and from Him a vineyard is sown, as is written: *My beloved had a vineyard on a fertile slope*.[857]

"What is בקרן בן שמן (*be-qeren ben shamen*), *on a fertile slope*? Describing how this vineyard emerges, how it is sown. Scripture responds by saying, *be-qeren*. What is *qeren*? As is written: בקרן היובל (*be-qeren ha-yovel*), *on the horn of Jubilee* (Joshua 6:5). It begins *on the horn of Jubilee*.[858] This *horn* joins that male called *ben shamen*. What is *ben shamen, son of oil*? As is said: בן חורין (*ben ḥorin*), *son of free ones* (Ecclesiastes 10:17),[859] both a single entity. *Shamen, oil*, from which flows anointing oil, kindling lamps[860]—so *ben shamen, son of oil*,

literally! Anointing oil gushing forth, kindling lamps, eventually drawn in by this *horn*, called *horn of Jubilee*. So royalty is always anointed with a horn; the kingdom of David endured because he was anointed with a horn, linked with it.[861]

"ויעזקהו (*Vay'azzeqehu*), *He enclosed it, cleared it of stones* —like עזקא (*izqa*), a ring, surrounded on every side.[862] [96b] *Cleared it of stones*—removing from it and its share all those princes, all those shield-bearing warriors, all those lower crowns;[863] taking this *vineyard* for His share, as is written: *For YHVH's share is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance* (Deuteronomy 32:9).

"*He planted it with choice vines*, as is said: *I planted you as a choice vine, entirely seed of truth* (Jeremiah 2:21)—כלה (*kulloh*), *entirely*, spelled with a ה (*he*): כלה (*kallah*), *bride*.[864] From here Abraham began engendering above; from this issued *seed of truth—entirely seed of truth*, indeed,[865] corresponding to what is written: כה (*Koh*), *So, shall your seed be* (Genesis 15:5),[866] all one entity.[867] Happy is the share of Israel, who have inherited this holy heritage!

"The verse concludes: *He built a tower inside*. What is *a tower?* As is said, *The name of YHVH is a tower of strength, into which runs the righteous one and is safe* (Proverbs 18:10)—*into which runs the righteous one*, literally![868]

"*And even hewed a winepress in it*—gate of Righteousness, as is said: *Open for me gates of righteousness* (Psalms 118:19).[869] Implying what? That every Israelite who is circumcised enters both of them, attaining both of them.[870] Whoever brings his son as this offering initiates him into the holy name.[871] Upon this, heaven and earth are erected, as is written: *Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth* (Jeremiah 33:25).[872]

"The master of this wedding celebration[873] has attained everything, seeing the blessed Holy One face-to-face this day![874] Happy is our share that we have attained this day!

Happy is your share with us! For this son born to you I proclaim: *Everyone who is called by My name,*[875] *whom I created, formed, and made for My glory* (Isaiah 43:7); and it is written: *All your children will be taught by YHVH, and great will be the peace of your children* (ibid. 54:13).”

They escorted Rabbi Abba for three miles.[876]

They said to him, “This master of the wedding celebration—your host—attained all this because he firmly fulfilled a *mitsvah*.”

He asked, “Which one?”

That man[877] replied, “My wife was the wife of my brother, who died childless, so I married her. This is the first son she has born to me, so I named him after my brother who passed away.”[878]

He[879] said to him, “From now on, call him Idi”—that is, Idi son of Ya’akov.[880]

Rabbi Abba blessed them and went on his way.

When he arrived, he arrayed words before Rabbi El’azar but was afraid to tell Rabbi Shim’on.[881] One day, he was in the presence of Rabbi Shim’on, who said, “Why is it written: *Abramfell on his face, and God spoke with him, saying, ‘As for Me, here is My covenant with you’* (Genesis 17:3–4)? This implies that until he was circumcised, he fell on his face and then He spoke with him; whereas after he was circumcised, he stood erect, fearless.[882] *As for Me, here is My covenant with you*, for he found himself circumcised.”[883]

Rabbi Abba said to him, “If it pleases my Master, I will speak before him some of the sublime words I have heard concerning this.”

He said, “Speak!”

He said, “I fear they might be punished because of me.”[884]

He replied, “Heaven forbid! *Of evil tidings he has no fear; his heart is firm, trusting in YHVH* (Psalms 112:7).”

He told him what happened, arraying before him all those words.

He said, “All those sublime words were concealed within you, and you didn’t convey them? I decree that for the next thirty days, whatever you study you will forget! Is it not written: *Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when you possess the power to act* (Proverbs 3:27)?”[885]

And so it was.

He said further, “I decree that with this Torah they will be exiled to Babylonia among all the Companions!”[886]

Rabbi Abba’s spirit was depressed. One day Rabbi Shim’on saw him, and said, “Your heart’s configuration is apparent in your face!”[887]

He replied, “Not for myself, but for them!”

He said, “Heaven forbid that they were punished for anything except revealing words so openly. When they go into exile among the Companions, they will learn those ways, so words will be concealed within them.[888] For words are revealed only among us, since the blessed Holy One has authorized us to reveal them.”[889]

Rabbi Yose said, “*Then your light will burst through like the dawn*… (Isaiah 58:8). The blessed Holy One will one day proclaim to His children: *Then your light will burst through like the dawn, and your healing quickly spring up. Your vindicator will march before you; the glory of* YHVH *will be your rear guard.*” [97a]

פרשת וירא

Parashat Va-Yera

“HE APPEARED” (GENESIS 18:1–22:24)

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, “*The blossoms have appeared on the earth, the time of singing has arrived;*[1] *the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land* (Song of Songs 2:12).

“*The blossoms have appeared on the earth*. When the blessed Holy One created the world, He endowed earth with every power befitting her. Everything existed in earth, but she yielded no fruit until Adam arrived. As soon as he arrived, everything appeared in the world; earth revealed her fruit and the powers that were deposited within her.[2]

“Similarly, heaven did not impart power to earth until Adam arrived, as is written: *No bush of the field was yet on earth, no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for YHVH Elohim had not rained upon earth and there was no human to till the soil* (Genesis 2:5). All generations were concealed, unrevealed; heaven was hindered from raining on earth, for *there was no human* to be found, *no human* yet created. All was delayed because of him. As soon as Adam appeared, immediately *the blossoms appeared on the earth*, along with all powers hidden, bestowed within her.

“*The time of singing has arrived*, inaugurating the ritual of singing praises before the blessed Holy One, lacking as long as Adam was not created.[3]

“*The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land*, for the word of the blessed Holy One was [97b] absent from the

world until Adam was created.[4] As soon as Adam appeared, everything appeared. Once he sinned, everything disappeared from the world and the earth was cursed, as is written: *Cursed is the ground because of you…* (ibid. 3:17), and similarly: *When you till the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you…* (ibid. 4:12),[5] and similarly: *Thorns and thistles it will sprout for you* (ibid. 3:18).

"Noah arrived—and invented spades and multitoothed files.[6] Later, *he drank of the wine and became drunk* (ibid. 9:21).[7] The inhabitants of the world came and sinned before the blessed Holy One,[8] so the powers of earth disappeared as before, and so they remained until Abraham arrived.

"As soon as Abraham arrived in the world, immediately *the blossoms appeared on the earth*—all powers of earth were arrayed and revealed.[9]

"*The time of pruning has arrived*—when the blessed Holy One told him to circumcise himself.[10] The moment that the covenant manifested in Abraham through circumcision, this entire verse was fulfilled, the world was firmly established, and the word of the blessed Holy One was openly revealed, as is written: *YHVH appeared to him* (ibid. 18:1)."[11]

Rabbi El'azar opened with this verse regarding the moment Abraham was circumcised. "Until he was circumcised, He spoke with him only on a low rung, upon which no high rungs stood.[12] As soon as he was circumcised, immediately *the blossoms appeared on the earth*—low rungs generated and arrayed by this low rung.[13]

"*The time of pruning has arrived*—branches of foreskin.[14]

"*The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land*—a voice issuing from within [98a] the innermost.[15] This voice *is heard*, a voice sculpting a spoken word, rendering her perfect.[16]

“Come and see: Until Abraham was circumcised, this rung alone stood over him, as we have said.[17] Once he was circumcised, what is written? *YHVH appeared to him*. To whom? It is not written: *YHVH appeared to Abram*, for if *to Abram*, how is this more laudable than before he was circumcised, when it is written: *YHVH appeared to Abram* (ibid. 12:7)?[18] Rather, a concealed mystery: *YHVH appeared to him*—to that rung who spoke with him,[19] which did not happen previously, before he was circumcised. Now voice was revealed, joining speech in addressing him.[20]

“*He was sitting at the opening of the tent* (ibid. 18:1).[21] *He*—not revealing whom, yet revealing here wisdom of all those rungs settling upon this lower rung,[22] once Abraham had been circumcised.

“Come and see: *YHVH appeared to him*—mystery of audible voice joining speech, revealing itself there.

“*He was sitting at the opening of the tent*—supernal world poised to illumine it.[23]

“*In the heat of the day* (ibid.), for right was radiant, rung to which Abraham cleaved.[24]

“Alternatively, *in the heat of the day*—when rung drew near rung, desiring one another.”[25] [98b]

He appeared to him (ibid.).

Rabbi Abba said, “Before he was circumcised, he was obstructed; as soon as he was circumcised, all was revealed—and *Shekhinah* rested upon him completely, fittingly.[26]

“Come and see: *He was sitting at the opening of the tent. He*—supernal world resting upon this lower world.[27] When? *In the heat of the day*—in the midst of desire of a certain righteous one abiding there.[28]

“Immediately, *He raised his eyes and saw: here, three men standing over him* (ibid., 2). Who are these *three men*? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who stand over this rung, from whom [99a] it sucks nourishment.[29]

"Then, *when he saw, he ran to meet them* (ibid.), for this lower rung desires to join them, delights in being drawn after them.

"*And bowed to the ground* (ibid.), preparing a throne for them.[30]

"Come and see: The blessed Holy One made King David one leg of the supernal throne, just like the patriarchs.[31] Although he serves as their throne, when he joins them, he becomes one leg installed in the supernal throne. Therefore King David assumed kingship in Hebron for seven years—in order to join them, as already explained."[32]

Rabbi Abba opened, "*Who may ascend the mountain of YHVH? Who may stand in His holy place?* (Psalms 24:3). Come and see: All those inhabitants of the world fail to see the foundation of their existence in the world.[33] Days pass, ascending, standing in the presence of the blessed Holy One—all those days lived by humans in this world. For they have all been created, and they all endure above. How do we know they have been created? Because it is written: *Days were formed* (ibid. 139:16).[34] When days approach departing this world, they all draw near the supernal King, as is written: *The days of David drew near to die* (1 Kings 2:1); *The days of Israel drew near to die* (Genesis 47:29).[35]

"So while a person is in this world, he neither considers nor contemplates the foundation of his existence. Rather, he regards each and every day as if it passes into emptiness.

"When a soul departs this world, which way she will be wafted is unknown, because the way ascending to the realm of radiance—where supernal souls shine—is not [99b] extended to every soul. For as one draws down upon himself in this world, so is he drawn upon departing.[36]

"Come and see: If a person is drawn toward the blessed Holy One—his desire pursuing Him in this world—then afterward, when he departs, he is drawn toward Him and

extended a way to ascend, following the attraction drawn daily, aspiringly in this world."

Rabbi Abba said, "One day I happened upon a certain town formerly inhabited by children of the East, and they told me some of the wisdom they knew from ancient days.[37] They had found their books of wisdom, and they brought me one, in which was written: 'As one's aspiration is directed in this world, so he draws upon himself a spirit from above, corresponding to the aspiration to which he cleaves.[38] If his aspiration focuses on a supernal entity, he draws that entity from above to himself below. If he aspires to cleave to the other side,[39] focusing there, then he draws that from above to himself below.'

"They said the essence of the matter depends on words, action, and the aspiration to cleave, whereby the side to which one cleaves is drawn from above to below.[40]

"I found in it[41] all the ritual acts of star-worship, requisites,[42] and how to focus the will upon them, [100a] drawing them down.[43]

"Similarly with one seeking to cleave above to Holy Spirit, for the matter depends on action, words, and aspiration of the heart focusing on that entity, drawing it toward him from above to below, cleaving to it.

"They said, 'As a person is drawn in this world, so is he drawn when departing this world. Whatever he cleaves to and is drawn to in this world, so too in that world: if holiness, holiness; if defilement, defilement.

'If holiness, he is drawn toward that side, cleaves to it above, and is transformed into an ordained attendant, ministering before the blessed Holy One among the other angels.[44] So he cleaves above, standing among those holy beings, as is written: *I will give you free access among these standing here* (Zechariah 3:7).

'So too, correspondingly, if defilement, he is drawn toward that side, made like one of them, clinging to them. They are called 'wounds wreaked upon humans';[45] and

when he leaves this world, they take him and drag him into Hell, to that region where brood of defilement are punished —those who have defiled themselves and their spirits. Afterward he clings to them, becoming a wounder like one of those universal wounders.'[46]

"I said to them, 'My children, this is close to words of Torah, but you should shun these books, so that [100b] your hearts will not stray after these rites, toward all those sides mentioned here; lest—Heaven forbid—you stray from the rite of the blessed Holy One! For all these books deceive human beings, since the children of the East were wise—having inherited a legacy of wisdom from Abraham, who bestowed it upon the sons of the concubines, as is written: *To the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, while he was still alive, and he sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the East* (Genesis 25:6).[47] Afterward they were drawn by that wisdom in various directions.

'Not so with the seed of Isaac and the share of Jacob, for it is written: *Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac* (ibid., 5)—holy heritage of faith to which Abraham cleaved.[48] From that share, from that side issued Jacob. What is written? *Behold, YHVH was standing over him* (ibid. 28:13),[49] and similarly: *You, Jacob, My servant*…[50] So a person should be drawn to the blessed Holy One, cleaving to Him.'

"Come and see: *Who may ascend the mountain of YHVH?* Scripture responds explicitly: *One who has clean hands* (Psalms 24:4), whose hands have not fashioned a figure[51] nor grasped what they should not; one who has not been defiled by them nor defiled the body with them, like those who defile themselves by hand defilingly.[52] This is *one who has clean hands*.

"*And a pure heart*, similarly: who has not drawn his will or heart to the other side, drawing himself away from the worship of the blessed Holy One.

“*Who has not lifted up* נפשי (*nafshi*), *My soul, to vanity*—written: נפשו (*nafsho*), *his soul.*[53] They have already established: [101a] *My soul*—soul of David, side of faith;[54] *his soul*—soul of a human being,[55] so that when he departs this world, his soul will ascend by worthy deeds,[56] sustaining him to walk among all those holy beings,[57] as is said: *I will walk before YHVH in the land of the living* (Psalms 116:9). Because he *has not lifted up My soul to vanity, he will receive a blessing from YHVH* (ibid. 24:4–5).

“Come and see: After Abraham circumcised himself, he sat in pain, and the blessed Holy One sent him three angels visibly to greet him.[58] Now, you might ask, ‘Visibly? Who can see angels? Look at what is written: *He makes His angels spirits* (ibid. 104:4)!’[59]

“Yet he really did see them, descending to earth in human form. This should not seem incomprehensible to you—for they really are holy spirits, but in descending to earth they clothe themselves in layers of atmosphere and material elements, manifesting as actual human beings in appearance and form.[60]

“Come and see: Abraham saw them in human guise, and even though he was in pain from circumcision, he ran after them, so as not to attenuate his pattern of behavior.”[61]

Rabbi Shim’on said, “He certainly saw them in angelic appearance,[62] since it is written: *He said*, ‘אדני (*Adonai*), *My Lord’* (Genesis 18:3),[63] spelled אלף דלת נון יוד (*alef, dalet, nun, yod*)—*Shekhinah* was arriving and these constituted Her support and Her throne, being three colors beneath Her.[64] Now, being circumcised, he saw what he did not see before he had been [101b] circumcised.[65] At first, he knew only that they were human; later he realized they were angels coming to him on a mission—when they said to him *‘Where is your wife Sarah?’* (Genesis 18:9) and gladdened him with the joyous news of Isaac.[66]

“אֵלָיו (*Elav*), *To him* (ibid.).[67] Dotted letters: אֵ֫יו (*alef, yod, vav*), a symbol alluding to that which lies above, alluding to

the blessed Holy One.[68]

"*He said, 'Here in the tent'* (ibid.). Here is written: *here in the tent*, and there is written: *an immovable tent…* (Isaiah 33:20).[69] Come and see: Since אֲיִי"וֹ (*alef, yod, vav*) is dotted, why is it followed by: איה (*ayyeh*), *where?*[70] Because of union of male and female as one, mystery of faith.[71] So Scripture states: *He said, 'Here in the tent'*—there, all-encompassing nexus, manifesting there.[72]

"*Where* is *your wife Sarah?* Now, didn't the supernal angels know that Sarah was in the tent? Why is it written *Where?* Because in this world, they know only what is conveyed to them. Come and see: *I will pass through the land of Egypt, I, YHVH* (Exodus 12:12).[73] Now, how many messengers and angels does the blessed Holy One possess! However, none of them knows how to distinguish between the drop of a firstborn and of a later born—only the blessed Holy One Himself.[74] Similarly, *Make a mark upon the foreheads of the people* (Ezekiel 9:4).[75] Why was this necessary? Because they know only what is conveyed to them, for example, everything the blessed Holy One intends to bring upon the world. How? Because the blessed Holy One issues a proclamation throughout the heavens, announcing what He intends to bring upon the world.

"Similarly, when the Destroyer appears [102a] in the world, a person should take cover in his house—not showing himself in the marketplace—so that he will not be destroyed, as is said: *None of you shall go out the door of his house until morning* (Exodus 12:22).[76] From them, yes,[77] but from the presence of the blessed Holy One, what is written? *'If one hides in secret places, do I not see him?' says YHVH* (Jeremiah 23:24).

"*Where is your wife Sarah?* For they did not want to speak in her presence. As soon as he replied *Here in the tent*, immediately, *I will surely return to you when life is due, and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son!…* (Genesis 18:10). Come and see courtesy: Before Abraham

invited them to eat, they told him nothing, so that it would not seem that he had invited them to eat because of that joyous news.[78] After *they ate* (ibid., 8), they told him the news.

"*They ate*. Would you ever imagine that supernal angels eat? Rather, in honor of Abraham it appeared so."[79]

Rabbi El'azar said, "*They* really *ate*; for they are fire consuming fire[80]—not apparently. Whatever Abraham offered them, they ate; for they eat from that side above.[81]

"Come and see: Whatever Abraham ate was eaten in purity;[82] so when he served them, they ate. In his home, Abraham observed laws of purity and impurity so vigilantly that an impure person could not even approach: immediately Abraham would realize that he was impure and have him undergo immersion—or have him wait seven days fittingly in his house. So it is![83]

"Come and see what is written: *If a man becomes impure due to nocturnal mishap* (Deuteronomy 23:11).[84] What is his remedy? It is written: *Toward evening he shall bathe in water* (ibid., 12).[85] If another impurity befell him [102b], such as flow, leprosy, or menstrual defilement[86]—there now being two impurities—then that immersion is insufficient, whether the mishap befell him before or after the other impurity.[87]

"Abraham and Sarah arranged immersion for everyone: he for men, she for women. Why did Abraham engage in purifying people? Because he was pure, called 'pure,' as is written: *Who can bring forth pure from impure? Is it not the One?*[88] (Job 14:4). *Pure*—Abraham who issued from Terah."[89]

Rabbi Shim'on said, "In order to reinforce the rung of Abraham. Who is that? Water.[90] So he arranged to purify the inhabitants of the world with water. When he invited the angels, what were his opening words? *Let a little water be fetched* (Genesis 18:4)—to buttress that rung holding water. Therefore he purified all human beings, purifying

them from the aspect of idolatry and from the aspect of defilement. As he purified the men, Sarah purified the women; so all who approached them were entirely pure.

"Come and see: Wherever Abraham resided, he planted a tree; but nowhere did it sprout fittingly until he resided in the land of Canaan. Through that tree, he discovered who embraced the blessed Holy One and who embraced idolatry. Whoever embraced the blessed Holy One—the tree would spread its branches, covering his head, shading him nicely. Whoever embraced the aspect of idolatry—that tree would withdraw, its branches rising above. Then Abraham knew and warned him[91]—not departing until he embraced faith. Whoever was pure the tree would welcome; whoever was impure it would not, so Abraham knew and purified them with water. Underneath that tree was a spring of water: if someone needed immediate immersion, water gushed toward him and the tree's branches withdrew. Then Abraham knew he was impure, requiring immediate immersion. If not,[92] the water dried up, so Abraham knew he had to remain impure for seven.[93]

"Come and see: Even when he invited the angels, he said to them *Recline under the tree* (ibid.), in order to see and test them;[94] for with that tree, he tested all inhabitants of the world. He enacted a mystery corresponding to the blessed Holy One, who is the Tree of Life for all;[95] so, *recline under the tree*—not under idolatry.

"Come and see: When Adam sinned, he sinned with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, inflicting death upon all inhabitants of the world.[96] When Abraham appeared, he mended the world with another tree, the Tree of Life,[97] proclaiming faith to all inhabitants of the world."

I will surely return to you when life is due.[98]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "*I will surely return*. The verse should read: *He will surely return*,[99]

since the key for fertilizing the barren lies in the hand of the blessed Holy One, not in the hand of any messenger, as we have learned: 'Three keys have not been handed over to any messenger: of childbirth, resurrection, and rain.'[100] Since they have not been handed over to any messenger, why is it written: *I will surely return?* If you say the blessed Holy One spoke, then look at what is written: *They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?'* (ibid., 9)! But indeed the blessed Holy One—standing above them—spoke the word; so it is written: *He said, 'I will surely return to you.'*

"Come and see: Everywhere it is written, *He said*, anonymously, or *He called*, anonymously,[101] this is the Angel of Covenant,[102] no other. *He said*, as is written: *He said, 'If you listen carefully to the voice of YHVH your God'* (Exodus 15:26)—*He said*, not specifying who. *He called*, as is written: *He called to Moses* (Leviticus 1:1), not specifying who it was. *He said*, as is written: *To Moses He said, 'Ascend to YHVH'* (Exodus 24:1), not specifying who it was. Similarly here, as is written: *He said, 'I will surely return'*—*He said*, anonymously, not specifying who [103a] it was. In all of these it was the Angel of Covenant, entirely the blessed Holy One,[103] so it is written: *He said, 'I will surely return to you.'*

"*And behold, your wife Sarah will have a son!* Why isn't it written: *And behold you will have a son?* So that he wouldn't think that he would issue from Hagar, as previously."[104]

Rabbi Shim'on opened, *"A son honors his father, and a servant his master* (Malachi 1:6). *A son honors his father*—Isaac to Abraham. When did he honor him? When he bound him on the altar,[105] intending to offer him up as a sacrifice. Isaac was thirty-seven years old, while Abraham was an old man, so if he had kicked with one foot he could not have withstood him.[106] Yet he honored his father, allowing himself to be bound like a lamb to fulfill his father's will.[107]

"*And a servant his master*—Eliezer to Abraham,[108] for he sent him to Haran, and he performed Abraham's will completely, honoring him, as is written: *YHVH has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy*, and similarly: *He said, 'I am Abraham's servant'* (Genesis 24:34–35), in order to honor Abraham. Here was a man who brought silver, gold, gems, and camels—and was himself quite handsome;[109] yet he did not claim to be Abraham's intimate friend or relative, but rather said, *I am Abraham's servant*, to enhance the prestige of Abraham, glorifying him in their eyes.

"So, *A son honors his father, and a servant his master*, but you—Israel, My children—are ashamed to declare that I am your father or that you are My servants. *If I am a father, where is My honor?* (Malachi, ibid.).[110] So, *Behold, a son!*[111] This is truly a son—not Ishmael; this is a son who honors his father fittingly.

"*For your wife Sarah*—Sarah's son, because of whom she died, over whom her soul suffered until it departed.[112]

"*Behold, a son for Sarah*—ascending because of him, when the blessed Holy One sits in judgment over the world. Then, *YHVH attended to Sarah as He had said* (Genesis 21:1)—we mention Sarah because of Isaac.[113] So he is *a son for Sarah*.

"*Behold, a son for Sarah*, for female absorbs the son from male.[114]

"*Sarah heard the opening of the tent, and he was behind it* (Genesis 18:10).[115] Why והוא אחריו (*ve-hu aḥarav*), *and he was behind it*? The verse should read: והיא אחריו (*ve-hi aḥarav*), *and she was behind him*.[116] But it is a mystery: *Sarah heard* what was spoken by *the opening of the tent*, namely, the blessed Holy One;[117] *ve-hu, and He*, spoke *aḥarav, after it*.[118] *Opening of the tent*—lower rung, opening of faith; *and He after it*—upper rung, confirming. Ever since Sarah had

existed in the world, she had never heard the word of the blessed Holy One, until that moment.

"Alternatively, Sarah was sitting *at the opening of the tent* to listen in,[119] and she heard the joyous word delivered to Abraham. *And he was behind it*—Abraham, who was sitting behind *Shekhinah*.

"Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in days (ibid., 11). What is *advanced in days?* The span of days befitting them: one, a hundred; the other, ninety.[120] They had entered days,[121] a span of days, fittingly. *Advanced in days*, as in the expression 'The day has advanced,' meaning, 'The day inclines toward evening.'[122]

"*The way of women had ceased for Sarah* (ibid.), but at that moment she discovered herself in delight, menstruating once again, so she said, *My husband is old* (ibid., 12)—'he isn't fit to engender a child: he's an old man!'"[123] Rabbi Yehudah opened, "*Her husband is known in the gates, as he sits among the elders of the land* (Proverbs 31:23). Come and see: The blessed Holy One has ascended in glory. He is hidden, concealed in utmost loftiness. There is no one in the world—nor since the day the world was created has there ever been—who can comprehend His wisdom or apprehend Him, for He is hidden, concealed, transcendent, beyond, beyond.

"All beings above and below cannot grasp, till finally they declare: *Blessed be the glory of YHVH from His place!* (Ezekiel 3:12). Those below proclaim that He is above, as is written: *Your glory is above the heavens* (Psalms 113:4).[124] Those above proclaim that He is below, as is written: *Your glory is over all the earth* (ibid. 57:12). Finally all of them, above and below, declare: *Blessed be the glory of YHVH from His place!*[125] For He is unknowable; no one has ever been able to comprehend Him. Yet you say: *Her husband is known in the gates?* [103b]

"But indeed, *Her husband is known in the gates*—the blessed Holy One,[126] who is known and grasped to the

degree that each one opens the gates of imagination,[127] according to the capacity to attain the spirit of wisdom. As one fathoms in his mind, so He is known in his mind. So He *is known in* those *gates*. But can He be known accurately? No one has ever been able to grasp and know Him."

Rabbi Shim'on said, "*Her husband is known in the gates*. Who are *the gates*? As is said: *Lift up your heads, O gates! Be lifted up, openings of eternity!* (Psalms 24:7).[128] Through these gates, supernal rungs, the blessed Holy One becomes known;[129] otherwise, no one could grasp.

"Come and see: The human soul is unknowable except through smooth members[130] of the body—rungs carrying out what the soul designs. So she is known and unknown.

"Similarly, the blessed Holy One is known and unknown, for He is soul of soul,[131] spirit of spirit, hidden and concealed from all, but through those gates, openings for soul,[132] the blessed Holy One becomes known.

"Come and see: There is opening within opening, rung upon rung, through which the glory of the blessed Holy One becomes known.[133] *Opening of the tent*—opening of Righteousness, as is said: *Open for me gates of righteousness* (ibid. 118:19).[134] This is the first opening to enter; through this opening all other supernal openings come into view.[135] Whoever attains this attains all other openings, for all abide here.

"Now—when this opening is unknown, since Israel is in exile—all those openings have withdrawn from it;[136] they cannot know or grasp.[137] However, when Israel will come forth from exile, all those supernal rungs are destined to alight upon it fittingly. Then the inhabitants of the world will discover precious, supernal wisdom, previously unknown to them, as is written: *The spirit of YHVH will alight upon him: a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and awe of YHVH* (Isaiah 11:2).[138] All those are destined to alight upon this lower opening, *opening of the tent*. All those are destined to alight

upon King Messiah below,[139] so he may judge the world, as is written: *He will judge the poor with righteousness* (ibid., 4).[140]

"So when Abraham was gladdened,[141] it was by this rung, as has been said, for it is written: *He said, 'I will surely return to you when life is due'* (Genesis 18:10). *He said*—who it was is not recorded. It was *opening of the tent*.[142] So *Sarah heard* (ibid.) this rung speaking, which she had never heard before, as is written: *Sarah heard the opening of the tent,*[143] who was delivering the joyous news: *I will surely return to you when life is due, and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son!*

"Come and see the immense love of the blessed Holy One toward Abraham! For Isaac did not issue from him until he was circumcised. Once circumcised, he was gladdened with Isaac because he was then holy seed. Until he was circumcised, he was not holy seed; then he was, as is written: *whose seed is in it, according to its kind* (Genesis 1:12).[144]

"Come and see: Until Abraham was circumcised, that seed of his was unholy,[145] issuing within foreskin, clinging to foreskin below.[146] Once circumcised, that seed issued within holiness, cleaving to holiness above, engendering above,[147] and Abraham cleaved to his rung fittingly.[148]

"Come and see: When Abraham engendered Isaac, he issued fittingly holy. Water actually conceived and bore darkness."[149]

One day Rabbi El'azar asked his father, Rabbi Shim'on, "Why did the blessed Holy One call him יצחק (*Yitsḥaq*), Isaac, as is written: *You will name him Yitsḥaq, Isaac* (Genesis 17:19)?[150] Apparently He called him Isaac before he issued into the world."[151]

He replied, "It has already been explained that fire appropriates water, for water flows on the side of *Gevurah*.[152] Come and ask the Levites, who gladden that side with

instruments and songs of praise, corresponding to this side.[153] So Isaac is joy, issuing from that side and cleaving there.[154]

"Come and see: *Yitsḥaq*, Isaac—jesting, joy, transforming water into fire, fire into water.[155] Therefore he was named so—the blessed Holy One giving him [104a] this name before he issued into the world,[156] announcing it to Abraham.[157]

"Come and see: In all other cases, the blessed Holy One let them name their children—even women named their children[158]—but here, the blessed Holy One did not let his mother name him, only Abraham, as is written: *You will name him Isaac*—you and no one else, transforming water into fire, fire into water, encompassing him in his side."[159]

Once Abraham was gladdened by the joyous news of Isaac, what is written? *The men arose from there and gazed toward Sodom* (Genesis 18:16).[160]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Come and see how kindly the blessed Holy One treats all creatures, especially those who walk in His paths. For even when He is about to execute judgment upon the world, He creates an opportunity for His beloved to demonstrate virtue before judgment arrives. For we have learned: When the blessed Holy One loves someone, He sends him a gift. What is that? A poor person, so that he may gain merit through him[161] and thereby draw upon himself a thread emanating from the right side[162]—spreading over his head, designating him, so that when judgment arrives, the Destroyer will be wary of him. Raising his eyes and seeing that sign, he withdraws from him,[163] wary of him. So the blessed Holy One provides him in advance an opportunity to demonstrate virtue.

"Come and see: When the blessed Holy One was about to execute judgment upon Sodom, He first rendered Abraham worthy—sending him a gift by whom to demonstrate virtue, in order to save his nephew Lot from there, as is written: *God remembered Abraham and sent*

Lot out of the midst of the upheaval (ibid. 19:29); it is not written: *God remembered Lot*. What did He remember? The merit he had attained previously with those three angels.[164]

"Similarly with a person who acts virtuously by offering charity to others: when judgment looms over the world, the blessed Holy One remembers the charity he performed. For whenever a person acts virtuously, it is recorded above; and even when judgment looms over him, the blessed Holy One remembers the kindness he performed with others and the merit he attained, as is written: *Charity delivers from death* (Proverbs 11:4).[165] Therefore the blessed Holy One provided Abraham an opportunity in advance,[166] so he could demonstrate virtue and save Lot.

"*They gazed toward Sodom*. Come and see: *The men arose from there*—from the meal Abraham had prepared for them, thereby attaining merit. For although they were angels,[167] he attained merit, and of all that food nothing remained—for Abraham's sake, so he could demonstrate virtue—for look at what is written: *They ate* (Genesis 18:8), eaten by their fire![168]

"Now, you might say, 'Look, there were three angels: this one, fire; this one, water; this one, air!'[169] But each encompassed the other,[170] so *they ate*. Similarly, *They beheld God, and they ate and drank* (Exodus 24:11)—actually eating, feasting on *Shekhinah*![171] Here too, they generated nourishment from the side of Abraham, leaving nothing of what Abraham offered them.[172]

"Similarly, one should drink from the cup of blessing to attain blessing from above.[173] They too ate from what Abraham prepared for them, rendering themselves worthy of being nourished from the side of Abraham, for from that side issues nourishment for all supernal angels.

"*They gazed*—arousal of compassion to deliver Lot.[174] Here is written: *They gazed*, and there is written: *Gaze*

from Your holy abode (Deuteronomy 26:15).[175] Just as there, compassion, so here, compassion.[176]

"*Abraham was walking with them to send them off* (Genesis 18:16)—to escort them."[177]

Rabbi Yeisa said, "If you say that Abraham knew they were angels, then why did he escort them?"[178]

Rabbi El'azar replied, "Because even though he knew, he regularly escorted all his guests. For a person must escort guests, since all depends upon this. While he was walking with them, the blessed Holy One revealed Himself to Abraham, as is written: *And YHVH said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham?'* (ibid., 17).[179] *And YHVH*, for the blessed Holy One was accompanying [104b] them.

"Come and see: When one person escorts another, he draws *Shekhinah* to join him,[180] to accompany him on the way and protect him. So a person must escort his guest, thereby joining him to *Shekhinah*, drawing Her to unite with him. So, *And YHVH said*."[181]

And YHVH said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?'

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, "*Surely YHVH Elohim does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets* (Amos 3:7). Happy are the righteous of the world, in whom the blessed Holy One delights! Whatever He does in heaven or intends to do in the world, He does by means of the righteous, hiding nothing from them.[182] For the blessed Holy One desires to collaborate with the righteous, so that the wicked will have no pretext to complain about anything He does.

"Come and see: He reveals everything to the righteous, so that they may come and warn people to turn back from sinning and not be punished by supernal judgment, and so they will have no pretext to complain against Him. Therefore the blessed Holy One divulges to them His secret

act.[183] Furthermore, so they cannot claim that He executed judgment upon them unjustly."[184]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Woe to the wicked who do not know and do not care, unaware of how to protect themselves from sin! The blessed Holy One's actions are true, His way just, yet He does nothing in the world without first revealing it to the righteous, so that people will have no pretext to complain. All the more so, human beings should act so that others cannot speak falsely against them, and so it is written: *You will be clear before YHVH and before Israel* (Numbers 32:22).[185] They should act so that others will have no pretext; they should warn them—if they are sinning and failing to protect themselves—so that the blessed Holy One's attribute of Judgment will have no opening to attack them. How?[186] Through returning[187] and good deeds."

Come and see: *And YHVH said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham* [*what I am about to do*]?'

Rabbi Yehudah said, "The blessed Holy One gave the entire land to Abraham [105a] as an eternal inheritance, as is written: *For all the land that you see I give to you and your seed forever* (Genesis 13:15), and: *Raise your eyes now and see* (ibid., 14).[188] Later, the blessed Holy One had to uproot these places;[189] He said, 'I have already given the land to Abraham, so I must inform him. Therefore, *And YHVH said*, [*'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?'*][190]

Rabbi Abba said, "Come and see the humility of Abraham! Although the blessed Holy One said to him, *How great is the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah!* (ibid. 18:20), even though He patiently told him that He was intending to execute judgment upon Sodom, he did not plead with Him to save Lot from the punishment.[191] Why? So as not to demand reward for his deeds.[192] Therefore the blessed Holy One sent Lot forth, delivering him for Abraham's sake, as is written: *God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out*

of the midst of the upheaval [*when He overturned the cities where Lot dwelled*] (ibid. 19:29).[193]

"What does this mean: *where Lot dwelled?*[194] It has been explained, but all of them were wicked—not a single one of them possessing the slightest merit, except for Lot.[195] From here we learn that any place where the wicked dwell is ruined.

"*Where Lot dwelled*. Now, did Lot dwell in all of them? [196] Rather, on account of him they dwelled and were not destroyed. If you say it was due to his merit, no; rather, the merit of Abraham."

Rabbi Shim'on said, "Come and see that serving a righteous person protects one in this world. Furthermore, even if one is sinful, he learns from his ways and follows them.[197] Come and see that because Lot joined Abraham—although he didn't adopt all his ways—he learned to render kindness to creatures by imitating Abraham,[198] and this is how all those cities were settled so long, after Lot immigrated there."

Rabbi Shim'on said, "Come and see that *Shekhinah* did not depart from Abraham while the blessed Holy One was speaking with him."

Rabbi El'azar said to him, "But *Shekhinah* was speaking with him! For the blessed Holy One appeared to him on this rung, as is written: *I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through El Shaddai* (Exodus 6:3)."[199]

He replied, "Certainly so! Come and see what is written: ויאמר יהוה (*Va-yomer YHVH*), *YHVH said, 'How great is the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah!'* (Genesis 18:20). First, אמר ויהוה (*Va-YHVH amar*), *And YHVH said,*[200] [*'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?'*] (ibid., 17); then, ויאמר יהוה (*Va-yomer YHVH*), *YHVH said*—upper rung manifesting to him upon lower rung.[201] [105b]

"It is written: *I will go down and see: If it accords with the cry that has come to Me,* עשו כלה (*asu kalah*), *carry out annihilation!* (ibid., 21).[202] To whom did He say this? If you

say, 'To those angels,' who has ever seen such a thing: speaking with one and commanding another?[203] Rather, He said it to Abraham, in whose jurisdiction those places lay.[204]

"Alternatively, to those angels.

"If it was said to Abraham, then why the plural: עשו (*asu*), *carry out?* The verb should be singular: עשה (*aseh*). Why *asu*? Because of Abraham and *Shekhinah*, who did not depart from him.[205]

"If it was said to the angels, that was because they were present there, poised to execute judgment, so, *asu*.

"Alternatively, *asu*, to do, according to its translation: *they have done*.[206] But didn't the blessed Holy One know? Why did He have to say: *I will go down and see?* All is revealed before Him.[207] Rather, *I will go down* from the rung of compassion to the rung of judgment—this is going down.[208] *And see*—this seeing is to scrutinize them, to consider which punishment to inflict upon them.

"We find positive seeing and negative seeing. Positive seeing, as is written: *God saw the Children of Israel, and He knew* (Exodus 2:25).[209] Negative seeing, as is written: *I will go down and see*, to scrutinize them in judgment.

"Therefore the blessed Holy One said, *Shall I hide from Abraham?*[210]

"*Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation* (Genesis 18:18). Why this blessing here? To reveal that even when the blessed Holy One sits in judgment over the world,[211] He does not change,[212] for He sits in judgment over one and in compassion over another simultaneously."

Rabbi Yehudah said, "But it is written: *As for me, may my prayer come to You, O YHVH, at a time of favor* (Psalms 69:14)! Certain times are *a time of favor*, certain times are not; sometimes He listens, sometimes not; sometimes He is found, sometimes not, as is written: *Seek YHVH while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near* (Isaiah 55:6)."

Rabbi El’azar said, “That applies to an individual, this to the community; that applies to one location, this to the whole world.[213] So He blessed Abraham, who is equivalent to the whole world, as is written: *These are the generations of heaven and earth* בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created* (Genesis 2:4), and it is written: באברהם (*be-Avraham*), through Abraham.[214]

“יהיה (*Yihyeh*), *Will become*. So we have learned: The blessed Holy One destined thirty righteous humans for the world, as He destined Abraham.”[215]

He opened, saying, “*Of the thirty he was most honored, but the three he did not attain* (2 Samuel 23:23).[216] *Of the thirty he was most honored*—the thirty righteous whom the blessed Holy One has destined for the world irrevocably. Benayahu son of Yehoyada, of whom is written: *Of the thirty he was most honored*, was one of them.[217] *But the three he did not attain*, not being equivalent to three others, on whom the world stands. *But the three he did not attain*, to be counted as one of them.[218] He proved worthy of entering the ranks of those thirty, *but the three he did not attain*, not worthy of joining them, of sharing their portion.

“יהיה (*Yihyeh*), *Will become*, as we have learned: thirty. So the blessed Holy One blessed him with those thirty righteous.

“Come and see: The blessed Holy One said to Abraham, *‘How great is the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah!* (Genesis 18:20), for how they treat the whole world has arisen before Me, since the whole world avoids setting foot in Sodom and Gomorrah, as is written: *A torrent bursts forth against strangers, forgotten of foot; feeblest of humans, wandering away* (Job 28:4).[219] *A torrent bursts forth against strangers*—bursting forth against any inhabitants of the world who entered there, for if they discovered anyone offering food or drink to another, they cast him into the depths of the river, along with the recipient. So all inhabitants of the world were *forgotten of foot*—withholding

their feet from entering there. And whoever did enter: *feeblest of humans, wandering away*—for they became emaciated, being refused food or drink,[220] so their features deteriorated from normal human features, as is written: *feeblest of humans, wandering away*. Here is written: *wandering*, and there is written: *Her paths wander* (Proverbs 5:6).[221] Similarly, they would deviate on pathways to avoid entering there. Even birds of heaven avoided [106a] entering, as is written: *a path unknown to any vulture* (Job, ibid., 7).[222] So the entire world cried out against Sodom and Gomorrah and all those cities,[223] since all were stained alike.

"*How great is the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah!*

"Abraham asked, 'Why?'

"He replied, *'How very grave is their sin!* (Genesis, ibid.). So, *I will go down and see* הבצעקתה (*ha-ke-tsa'aqatah*), *if* [*they have done altogether*] *according to her cry* (ibid., 21). The verse should read: הכצעקתם (*ha-ke-tsa'aqatam*), *if according to their cry*, for look, it is written: *the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah*! There were two cities, so why *if according to her cry*? But they have already established this.[224]

"Come and see: On the side beneath the hailstone,[225] vapors ascend in a thick cluster,[226] condensing into a single drop, entering chasms of the immense abyss,[227] becoming five-in-one,[228] one when voices[229] clarify, all becoming one. A voice ascending from below[230] enters among them, conducted as one. That voice, ascending, descending, clamors for justice to be conducted below. When this voice ascends, demanding justice, the blessed Holy One manifests to scrutinize in judgment."

Rabbi Shim'on said, "*If according to her cry*. Who is this? Decree of Judgment,[231] demanding justice every day. So we have learned: For many years Decree of Judgment stood in the presence of the blessed Holy One, demanding justice for the sale of Joseph by his brothers.[232] Decree of

Judgment cries out for justice, so *If according to her cry* הבאה (*ha-ba'ah*), *that has come, to Me*.

"What is *ha-ba'ah to Me*? A mystery, as is written: *In the evening she* באה (*ba'ah*), *comes, in the morning she returns* (Esther 2:14).[233] This is *ha-ba'ah, coming, to Me*, constantly.[234] Similarly, *End of all flesh comes before Me* (Genesis 6:13), as already explained."[235]

Abraham drew near and said, "Will You really sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?" (ibid. 18:23).

Rabbi Yehudah said, "Who has ever seen a father as compassionate as Abraham? Come and see: Of Noah is written: *God said to Noah, 'End of all flesh has come before Me…. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood'* (ibid. 6:13–14), and he was silent, saying nothing, not pleading for mercy.[236] But Abraham, as soon as the blessed Holy One said to him, *How great is the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah! I will go down and see* (ibid. 18:20–21), immediately, *Abraham drew near and said, 'Will You really sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?'"*

Rabbi El'azar said, "Even Abraham did not act perfectly. Noah did nothing at all. Abraham demanded justice fittingly, so the innocent not perish with the guilty, beginning with fifty, until ten.[237] He acted but did not culminate, since he did not plead for mercy unconditionally, for Abraham said, 'I don't want to claim reward for my deeds.'[238]

"But who acted perfectly? Moses, for as soon as the blessed Holy One said *They have been quick to turn aside from the way… They have made themselves a molten calf and bowed to it* (Exodus 32:8), what is written? *Moses sweetened the face of YHVH his God* (ibid., 11), finally saying *Now, if You would only bear their sin! If not, please obliterate me from the book that You have written!* (ibid., 32). Even though all of them had sinned, he did not budge

from there until He said *I forgive, according to your word* (Numbers 14:20).[239]

"But Abraham only cared if there were innocent people among them, otherwise not.[240] So there was never a human being in the world who defended his generation like Moses, Faithful Shepherd.[241]

"*Abraham drew near and said*—preparing himself to demand. *Perhaps fifty will be found there* (Genesis 18:24)—beginning with fifty, beginning of knowing,[242] until ten, who is tithe, end of all rungs."[243]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "Until ten—those ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.[244] So he began from fifty and continued till ten, and upon reaching ten he said, 'Lower than this is unsuited for returning.'[245] Therefore he went no lower than ten."

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom… (ibid. 19:1).[246]

Rabbi Yose said, "Come and see what is written above: *YHVH left when* [106b] *He had finished speaking to Abraham* (ibid. 18:33).[247] For when *Shekhinah* departed from Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place, then *the two angels came to Sodom in the evening*, since one disappeared with *Shekhinah*, leaving these two.[248] As soon as Lot saw, he ran after them. Why? Did he bring every new arrival into his house, offering them food and drink? Wouldn't the townspeople have killed him? Look how they punished his daughter![249] But since it was night, he thought the townspeople wouldn't notice him. Nevertheless, as soon as they entered the house they all ganged around."

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "Why did Lot run after them? Because it is written: *Lot saw and ran to greet them.*"[250]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah and Rabbi Yeisa. One said, "He saw the image of Abraham accompanying them." The other said,

"*Shekhinah* appeared above them. Here is written: *Lot saw and ran to greet them*, and there is written: *He saw and ran to greet them from the opening of the tent* (ibid., 2). Just as there he saw *Shekhinah*,[251] so here he saw *Shekhinah*. So, *Lot saw and ran to greet them…and he said*, '*Please*, אדני (*Adonai*), *my Lord* (ibid., 19:2), spelled אלף דלת נון יוד (*alef, dalet, nun, yod*).[252]

"*Please turn aside* (ibid.).[253] The verse should read: *Please draw near*. Why *Please turn aside?* To lead them around behind the house—so that the townspeople wouldn't see them, so they wouldn't enter the house directly. So, *Please turn aside*."[254]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah opened, "*For He views the ends of the earth, sees everything under the heavens* (Job 28:24). How intensely human beings should contemplate the service of the blessed Holy One and engage in Torah day and night! For on everyone engaging in Torah, the blessed Holy One prides Himself above and below—since Torah is a tree of life,[255] a tree of life for all those grasping her, extending them life in this world [107a] and in the world that is coming.

"Come and see: *For He views the ends of the earth*, to provide them food, to satisfy all their needs, since He watches over her constantly, as is written: *The eyes of YHVH your God are always upon her, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year* (Deuteronomy 11:12).[256] For what is written of this land? *From afar she brings her food* (Proverbs 31:14).[257] Afterward, she provides food and nourishment for all those beasts of the field,[258] as is written: *She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household and a portion for her maidens* (ibid., 15). So, *He views the ends of the earth, sees everything under the heavens*—all the inhabitants of the world, providing them food, according to what each of them needs, as is written:

You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing (Psalms 145:16).

"Alternatively, *For He views the ends of the earth*, gazing upon human actions, inspecting everything humans do in the world. *Sees everything under the heavens*, observing each and every one.

"Come and see: When the blessed Holy One saw the actions of Sodom and Gomorrah He sent those angels to destroy Sodom. What is written? *Lot saw*—he saw *Shekhinah*. Now, who can see *Shekhinah*?[259] Rather, he saw a radiant aura above their heads, and then *he said, 'Please*, אדני (*Adonai*), *my Lord,'* spelled אלף דלת נון יוד (*alef, dalet, nun, yod*), as has been explained.[260] He said this because of *Shekhinah*, shimmering radiance.

"*Please turn aside to your servant's house, spend the night, wash your feet* (Genesis 19:2). Abraham did not act this way; rather, first he said *Wash your feet*, and then *Let me fetch a little bread so you can refresh yourselves* (ibid. 18:4–5). But Lot said *Please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night*, and then *Wash your feet, and you can rise early and go on your way*, so that people wouldn't discover them.[261]

"*They said, 'No, we will spend the night in the square'* (ibid. 19:2). For that is what visitors there used to do—since no one would bring them into his house—so they said *No, we will spend the night in the square*. What is written? *He urged them strongly…* (ibid., 3).[262]

"Come and see: When the blessed Holy One executes judgment upon the world, a single messenger acts. Yet now we see two messengers. Why? Wasn't one enough? But really there was only one! As for the wording 'two,' one was to bring out Lot and save him, so afterward one remained."[263]

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, "*Behold, the day of YHVH is coming, cruel with wrath* (Isaiah 13:9).[264] *Behold, the day of YHVH*—

YHVH rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from YHVH out of heaven (Genesis 19:24).

Lower Court of Justice.[265] *Is coming*—as has been said: *coming to Me* (Genesis 18:21),[266] for it executes judgment only after entering and obtaining authorization.[267] Similarly, *End of all flesh comes before Me* (Genesis 6:13).[268]

"Alternatively, *Behold, the day of YHVH is coming*—when Destroyer below[269] seizes the soul, so, *cruel with wrath*.

"*To make the earth a desolation* (Isaiah, ibid.)—Sodom and Gomorrah.

"*And annihilate its sinners* [107b] *from it* (ibid.)—inhabitants of the land.

"What is written next? *For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not shine their light* (ibid., 10), because from heaven He rained fire upon them, eliminating them from the world.

"What is written next? *I will make a human more precious than pure gold* (ibid., 12)—Abraham, elevated by the blessed Holy One above all inhabitants of the world."[270]

Rabbi Yehudah applied these verses[271] to the day on which the Temple was destroyed, for on that day those above and below[272] darkened—heaven and stars darkened.

Rabbi El'azar applies these verses to the day on which the blessed Holy One will raise the Assembly of Israel from the dust. That day will be known above and below, as is written: *There will be one day that will be known as YHVH's* (Zechariah 14:7). That day is a day of vengeance, when the blessed Holy One intends to wreak vengeance upon other nations. When He does, then, *I will make a human more precious than pure gold*—King Messiah, who will transcend and be more precious than all inhabitants of the world, all of whom will worship and bow down before him, as is written: *Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow down*

before him…Kings of Tarshish and of the isles [*will render tribute*]…(Psalms 72:9–10).

Come and see: Although this prophecy was proclaimed over Babylon,[273] it was proclaimed overall, for we see what is written in this portion: *For YHVH will have compassion on Jacob…Nations will take them and bring them to their place* (Isaiah 14:1–2).

ויהוה (*Va-YHVH*), *And YHVH, rained on Sodom*—rung of Lower Court of Justice obtaining authorization from above.[274]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "Executing judgment with compassion,[275] as is written: *from YHVH out of heaven,*[276] so that judgment would manifest compassionately.

"Now, you might ask, 'What compassion is found here?'

"As is written: *So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out* (Genesis 19:29).[277] Later, two entire nations issued from him,[278] and he was privileged to have among his descendants King David and King Solomon.[279]

"See what is written: *As they were bringing them outside*, [*he said, 'Flee for your life! Do not look behind you, do not stop anywhere in the plain. Flee to the hills or you will be annihilated!'*] (ibid., 17). Come and see: When judgment looms over the world a person should not let himself be found in the street, as has been said, because since judgment prevails, it does not distinguish between innocent and guilty.[280] Nor should one gaze there—which is why, as has been said, Noah shut himself in the ark, so that he would not observe the world as judgment was being executed.[281] It is written too: *None of you shall go out the door of his house until morning* (Exodus 12:22),[282] until judgment has been executed. So, *he said, 'Flee for your life! Do not look behind you.'"*

Rabbi Yitsḥak and Rabbi Yehudah were walking on the way. Rabbi Yehudah said to Rabbi Yitsḥak, "The punishment

inflicted by the blessed Holy One during the Flood and the punishment of Sodom were both punishments of Hell, since sinners in Hell are punished by water and fire."[283]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "Sodom was punished by the punishment of Hell, as is written: *And YHVH rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah*—one from the side of water, one from the side of fire,[284] constituting the punishment of Hell, where sinners are punished by both of these."

He replied, "The punishment of sinners in Hell lasts twelve months.[285] Then the blessed Holy One raises them from Hell, where they have been purged, and they sit at Hell's gate, watching sinners enter to be punished, and they plead for mercy for them. Soon the blessed Holy One takes pity upon them,[286] bringing them to where they should be. From that day on, the body subsides in dust, while the soul inherits [108a] a fitting domain.

"Come and see what has been said: Even the victims of the Flood were punished solely with fire and water—water pouring from above, boiling water from below like fire,[287] inflicted with both, for so is supernal punishment. Similarly, Sodom: *brimstone and fire*."

He asked, "Will they arise for the Day of Judgment?"

He replied, "This has already been discussed,[288] but those of Sodom and Gomorrah will not arise,[289] as proven by Scripture: *Brimstone and salt, all its land burning, nothing sown, nothing sprouting*… [*like the overturning of Sodom and Gomorrah*…] *which YHVH overturned in His anger and His fury* (Deuteronomy 29:22).[290] *Which YHVH overturned*—in this world; *in His anger*—in the world that is coming; *and His fury*—when the blessed Holy One intends to revive the dead."

He said to him, "Come and see: Just as their land was destroyed forever and ever,[291] so they themselves were destroyed forever and ever.

“Come and see the justice of the blessed Holy One: measure for measure. They did not revive the soul of the needy with food and drink,[292] so the blessed Holy One does not restore their souls in the world that is coming.

“Come and see: They refrained from charity, which is life,[293] so the blessed Holy One withheld life from them—in this world and in the world that is coming. Just as they blocked roads and paths for inhabitants of the world,[294] so the blessed Holy One blocked roads and paths of compassion for them—in this world and in the world that is coming.”

Rabbi Abba said, “All will arise—will arise for judgment.[295] Of them is written: *these to shame and everlasting contempt* (Daniel 12:2).[296] The blessed Holy One, however, is a master of compassion. Since He judged them in this world, and they received their punishment, they are not inflicted with all those punishments.”

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “It is written: *He sent Lot out of the midst of the upheaval* [*when He overturned the cities where Lot dwelled*] (Genesis 19:29). What does this mean: *when He overturned the cities where Lot dwelled?*. That Lot dwelled in them all, as is written: *Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, pitching his tent as far as Sodom* (ibid. 13:12).[297] But no one welcomed him except the King of Sodom, who welcomed him [108b] on account of Abraham.[298]

“*His wife looked behind him* (ibid. 19:26).[299] The verse should read *behind her;* but it means ‘behind *Shekhinah*.’”[300]

Rabbi Yose said, “Behind Lot, for the Destroyer was following him.[301] Now, was he really following him? He was the one who sent him away![302] Yet, wherever Lot went, the Destroyer lingered, destroying. Any place he passed, leaving it behind, the Destroyer overturned. So he said, *‘Do not look behind you*, for I will destroy behind you!’ Therefore it is written: *His wife looked behind him*, and upon seeing the Destroyer, *she became a pillar of salt*. For

as long as the Destroyer doesn't see a person's face, he can't destroy him.[303] As soon as his wife turned her face to gaze at him, immediately *she became a pillar of salt."*

Rabbi El'azar and Rabbi Yose were sitting one day engaged in a verse. Rabbi El'azar said, "It is written: *A land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything* (Deuteronomy 8:9). Why this repetition of *in which?* Because, as has been said, the blessed Holy One apportioned all nations and lands among deputies and envoys, while He has inherited the land of Israel, not granting it to any other envoy or deputy, rather ruling over it Himself alone. Similarly, no other angel or deputy rules over the people of Israel, rather He alone.[304] So He brought the people over whom no one else rules into the land over which no one else rules.

"Come and see: The blessed Holy One provides nourishment there first, and only then to all the world.[305] All other nations, *in scarcity;* not so, the land of Israel: she is nourished first, then all the world. So, *a land… without scarcity*—rather, in abundance, in total satisfaction. *In which you will eat*—nowhere else. *In which*—in sanctity of the land; *in which* abides supernal faith; in which abides supernal blessing, nowhere else.[306]

"Come and see what is written: *like the garden of YHVH, like the land of Egypt* (Genesis 13:10).[307] Now, it is unclear whether *the garden of YHVH* is *the land of Egypt* or Sodom [109a]—or *the garden of YHVH* known as Garden of Eden.[308] However, *like the garden of YHVH*—containing total satisfaction and delight;[309] so too, Sodom and Egypt. Just as *the garden of YHVH* needs no human watering,[310] neither does Egypt,[311] nor did Sodom, for it is written: *it was all well watered* (ibid.). Since it possessed all delights of the world, they wanted no one else to delight there."[312]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "They were wicked themselves and with their money. Whoever is stingy toward the poor

doesn’t deserve to exist in the world—and furthermore has no life in the world that is coming. Whoever is lavish toward the poor deserves to exist in the world, and for his sake the world exists; he has life and longevity in the world that is coming.”[313]

Lot went up from Zoar and settled in the hills with his two daughters [*for he was afraid to settle in Zoar*] (ibid., 30). Why? Because he saw that it was close to Sodom, so he went up from there.

Rabbi Yitsḥak opened, “*He revolves wheels*[*314*] *by His devices, according to their deeds, whatever He commands them on the face of the inhabited earth* (Job 37:12). *He revolves wheels*—The blessed Holy One spins revolutions[315] in the world, bringing cloaked dazzlers[316] to carry out His acts, then turning and transforming them. How? *By His devices*, cunningly spinning revolutions to generate them anew. [109b]

“*According to their deeds*—on account of human deeds: As they act, so He transforms them.[317]

“*Whatever He commands them on the face of the inhabited earth*—because of human acts He rotates those *wheels*, the turn of events, in all that He commands them *on the face of the earth*.”[318]

Rabbi El’azar said, “He *revolves wheels*—The blessed Holy One spins revolutions, bringing about enduring phenomena in the world, but when people suppose that those phenomena will endure, the blessed Holy One transforms them.

“בתחבולותיו (*Be-taḥbulotav*), *By His devices*—spelled בתחבולתו (*be-taḥbulato*), *by His device*.[319] Like an artisan fashioning pottery: as long as that kick-wheel[320] keeps spinning in front of him, he can fashion as he imagines—this way or that, turning one vessel into another—since the wheel is spinning before him.[321] So the blessed Holy One transforms His activity בתחבולתו (*be-taḥbulato*)—missing the י (*yod*)—*by His*

device. Who is that? Lower Court of Justice, a potter's wheel spinning in front of Him, so He transforms vessels, turning one into another.[322] All this, *according to* human *deeds:* if they act well, that kick-wheel spins them to the right, so events in the world come about for them favorably, fittingly. The wheel spins constantly to the right, never dragging, and the world revolves accordingly. However, if humans begin to do wrong, [110a] the blessed Holy One spins *His* constantly spinning *device*—which had maintained a rightward spin—to the left, rotating *wheels* and previously fashioned vessels leftward. Then the potter's wheel spins and events in the world come about harmfully for humans. The wheel keeps spinning in that direction until people return to acting well. It turns upon human deeds, so *by His device, according to their deeds*—never standing still.[323]

"Come and see: The blessed Holy One revolves the turn of events in the world to arrange everything fittingly, all issuing from a supernal source and root. He drew Abraham near to Him and Ishmael issued from him, since Abraham was then uncircumcised—being situated below, not yet perfected by the sign of the holy covenant.[324] Then the blessed Holy One revolved revolutions *by His device*, and Abraham was circumcised—entering the covenant, being perfected through his name, called אברהם (*Avraham*), crowned by supernal ה (*he*) in the mystery of water from spirit.[325] Once perfected and circumcised, Isaac issued from him: holy seed, linked above in the mystery of fire from water.[326] So it is written: *I planted you as a choice vine, entirely seed of truth* (Jeremiah 2:21)[327]—not linked to the Other Side.[328]

"Come and see: From Lot and his daughters issued two separate nations,[329] linked to the side befitting them.[330] So the blessed Holy One revolves [nob] revolutions, rotates rotations in the world, so that all will turn out fittingly, all linked to its site.[331]

“Come and see: It would have been more seemly for Lot had the blessed Holy One engendered these two nations from him and his wife, but it was in order for them to be linked to the site befitting them.[332] They were generated from wine mysteriously, as is said: *He drank of the wine and became drunk* (Genesis 9:21). This has already been discussed and established.”[333]

“Come and see: Moab and Ammon were named by them.”[334]

Moab (ibid. 19:37).[335] Rabbi Yose said, “Impudently she said, ‘מואב (*Mo’av*), *Moab*—מאבא (*me-abba*), from father, he issued.’ *The younger one also gave birth to a son and named him Ben-Ammi* (ibid, 38).[336] Decorously she said, ‘*Ben-Ammi*, Son of my People,’ not revealing from whom he issued.[337]

“Come and see: First it is written: *He was unaware of her lying down* ובקומה (*uvqumah*), *or her rising* (ibid., 33)[338]—spelled with a ו (*vav*), dotted above, supernal assistance attending that act, from which King Messiah was destined to issue, so here vav is included.[339] Concerning the other, it is written: ובקמה (*uvqumah*), *or her rising* (ibid., 35)—lacking ו (*vav*), since from her a share of the blessed Holy One did not issue, like the other.[340] So concerning the other, older one, it is written: ובקומה (*uvqumah*), *or her rising*, with a ו (*vav*), dotted above.”

Rabbi Shim’on said, “*He was unaware* that the blessed Holy One intended to raise from her King David, Solomon, all the other kings, and King Messiah. Further, *or her rising*, as is written: *She rose before one person could recognize another* (Ruth 3:14).[341] That day, she really rose [111a]—for Boaz united with her *to raise the name of the dead upon his inheritance* (Ruth 4:10),[342] so from her were raised all those kings and the eminence of Israel. *He was unaware of her lying down*, as is written: *She lay at his feet until dawn* (ibid. 3:14). *Or her rising*, as is written: *She rose*

before one person could recognize another. Therefore ובקוּמה (*uvqumah*), *or her rising*, contains a dotted ו (*vav*).

"Come and see the humility of Abraham! For even at first—when the blessed Holy One was about to execute judgment upon Sodom—he didn't plead for mercy for Lot;[343] and later when *he saw the smoke of the land rising like the smoke of a furnace* (Genesis 19:28), he didn't implore for Lot nor say anything to the blessed Holy One. Nor did the blessed Holy One say anything to him, so that Abraham wouldn't think He had deducted any of his merit.[344]

"Now, if you say that Abraham didn't care about Lot at all—look! He risked his life by going to wage war against five mighty kings,[345] as is said: *When Abram heard that his kinsman had been captured*... [*he pursued as far as Dan. He deployed against them by night, he and his servants, and struck them, pursuing them as far as Hobah*...] *He recovered all the possessions and also brought back his kinsman Lot and his possessions*... (Genesis 14:14–16). But out of his love for the blessed Holy One, and because he saw Lot's improper conduct,[346] Abraham did not want the blessed Holy One—simply for his sake—to forgive anything he had done.[347] So he didn't implore for him, neither at the beginning nor at the end." *Abraham journeyed from there to the region of the Negev* (ibid. 20:1). All his journeyings were toward the side of the South [111b] more than toward any other side,[348] since he acted in wisdom, cleaving to the South.[349]

Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister" (ibid., 2).[350] We have learned: A person should not rely on a miracle;[351] and if the blessed Holy One performs a miracle for a person, he should not rely on miracles constantly, for miracles do not happen every moment.[352] If a person puts himself in obvious danger, he exhausts all the merit he has previously accumulated—as they have established, based on the verse: *I am diminished by all the kindness and*

faithfulness [*You have shown Your servant*] (Genesis 32:11),[353] Since Abraham had already gone up from Egypt and been saved once,[354] why did he now put himself into a similar predicament by saying *She is my sister?* Because Abraham did not rely on himself at all. Rather, he saw *Shekhinah* abiding constantly with Sarah, never departing;[355] and because She was there, Abraham relied on saying *She is my sister*, as is written: *Say to wisdom, "You are my sister"* (Proverbs 7:4).[356] Therefore he said, *She is my sister*.

אלהים (*Elohim*), *God, came to Abimelech*…(Genesis 20:3). Does the blessed Holy One come to the wicked? Similarly, it is written: *Elohim came to Balaam* (Numbers 22:9); *Elohim came to Laban the Aramean* (Genesis 31:24). However, it was the appointed messenger assigned to them, for in carrying out their mission they all bear this name, coming from the side of Judgment.[357] So, *Elohim came to Abimelech in a night dream and said to him, "You are about to die because of the woman you have taken!"* (ibid. 20:3).[358]

Rabbi Shim'on opened, *"A lip of truth endures forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment* (Proverbs 12:19). *A lip of truth endures forever*—Abraham, all of whose words, at first and at last, were truthful. *But a lying tongue lasts only a moment*—Abimelech. Abraham said *She is my sister*. This was at first; because of *Shekhinah*—who accompanied Sarah—he said *She is my sister*.[359] Abraham acted in wisdom. How so? [112a] Since Abraham constitutes the right side, he said *She is my sister*,[360] as is said: *My sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one!* (Song of Songs 5:2).[361] So Abraham always called Her *my sister*, cleaving to Her so they would never part.

"At last,[362] what is written? *Besides, she really is my sister, my father's daughter though not my mother's* (Genesis 20:12). Was it so?[363] Rather, everything he said referred to *Shekhinah*. At first, *She is my sister*, as is written:

Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister.' Later, וגם (*Ve-gam*), *Besides… really*. Why ve-gam? To amplify what he had said at first:[364] *She is my sister. She is my sister, my father's daughter*, daughter of supernal Wisdom.[365] So She is called *my sister* and *wisdom*.—*though not my mother's daughter*[366]—deriving from the realm of origin of all, concealed, supreme.[367] So, *she became my wife* (ibid.), in companionship and love, as is written: *his right hand embracing me* (Song of Songs 2:6).[368] All a mystery of wisdom!

"Come and see: At first when he went down to Egypt, Abraham said so to cleave to faith,[369] calling her *my sister* so he would not stray into those foreign rungs.[370] Here too, *my sister*, so he would not deviate from perfect faith, for Abimelech and all the inhabitants of that land followed idolatry, while he cleaved to faith. So as he entered, he said *My sister!* Just as a sister never parts from her brother, so here too; for a wife can separate but not a sister—since two siblings can never ever part. So Abraham said *She is my sister*. Whereas they were all inflamed by dazzling stars and constellations, worshiping them, Abraham cleaved to faith, saying, *'My sister!* May we never part!' Your mnemonic: *for his virgin sister* (Leviticus 21:3), spoken of the priest—realm inhabited by Abraham.[371]

"It is written: *YHVH your God you shall hold in awe, and Him you shall serve, to Him you shall cleave, by His name you shall swear* (Deuteronomy 10:20).[372] This verse has been established,[373] but come and see! It is not written ליהוה (*La-YHVH*) *your God you shall hold in awe* but rather [112b] את יהוה (*Et YHVH*).[374] What is את (*Et*)? First rung, realm of awe of the blessed Holy One.[375] So it is written: *you shall hold in awe*, for there one must stand in awe before his Lord, this being the Court of Justice.[376]

"ואותו (*Ve-Oto*), *And Him, you shall serve*—higher rung, standing over this lower rung, eternally inseparable.[377] ואותו את (*Et ve-Oto*), *Et and Him*, cleaving to one another

inseparably. What is ואותו (*ve-oto*)? Site of the holy covenant, eternal אות (*ot*), sign.[378] For service does not pertain to *Et*, who is not to be served but held in awe; rather, service focuses above, so *ve-Oto, and Him, you shall serve*.[379]

"*To Him you shall cleave*—to the site where cleaving cleaves, the torso abiding in the center.[380]

"*By His name* תשבע (*tishshava*), *you shall swear*—שביעאה (*shevia'ah*), seventh, of rungs.[381] Your mnemonic: *David their king, whom I will raise up for them* (Jeremiah 30:9).[382]

"So Abraham cleaved to faith[383] when he went down to Egypt and when he went to the land of the Philistines. This can be compared to a person who was about to descend into a deep pit. He was afraid he would not be able to come back up. What did he do? He tied a length of rope above the pit, saying, 'Since I have tied this knot, now I can enter.' Similarly, when Abraham was about to go down to Egypt, he first tied a knot of faith, so he would have something to grasp; then he descended. Likewise when he entered the land of the Philistines. So, *A lip of truth endures forever*—Abraham; *but a lying tongue lasts only a moment*—Abimelech, who said *I did this with an innocent heart and clean hands* (Genesis 20:5),[384] but when God replied to him, what is written? *Yes, I know that you did this with an innocent heart* (ibid., 6), while *clean hands* are not mentioned."[385]

Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet (ibid., 7).

Rabbi Yehudah opened, "He *guards the feet* of חסידו (*ḥasidav*), *His faithful ones, but the wicked are silenced in darkness* (1 Samuel 2:9)[386]—spelled חסידו (*ḥasido*), *His faithful one*,[387] namely, Abraham, whom the blessed Holy One guarded constantly, never withdrawing protection from him. As to the expression *the feet of*, this means 'his wife,'[388] for the blessed Holy One sent His *Shekhinah* along with her, guarding her constantly.

“Alternatively, *He guards the feet of His faithful one*—Abraham, constantly accompanied by the blessed Holy One, so that no one could harm him.

“*But the wicked are silenced in darkness*—those kings whom the blessed Holy One slew on the night he pursued them,[389] as is written: *are silenced by darkness*—night linked with darkness, slaying them;[390] Abraham pursuing, night slaying them, as is written: *He divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and he smote them* (Genesis 14:15).[391] *He divided himself against them by night*—the blessed Holy One, dividing compassion from judgment to avenge Abraham.[392] So, *the wicked are silenced in darkness*.

“*And he smote them*. The verse should read: *And they smote them*.[393] But it was the blessed Holy One.

“*For not by might does one prevail*, for he and Eliezer were all alone.”[394]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, “But we have learned: ‘Where danger prevails, one should not rely on a miracle.’[395] Now, nowhere was more fraught with danger than here—where Abraham pursued five kings to wage war!”[396]

Rabbi Yehudah replied, “When Abraham set out, he never intended to wage war, nor did he rely on a miracle. Rather, Lot’s suffering thrust him from home; and he took money to ransom him,[397] prepared—if he should fail—to die with him in captivity. As soon as he left, he saw *Shekhinah* shining in front of him,[398] surrounded by numerous hosts; so then he pursued them—and the blessed Holy One slew them, as is written: *The wicked are silenced in darkness*.”

Rabbi Shim’on said, “It is a mystery: *He guards the feet of His faithful one*—Abraham. When he set out, Isaac joined him, and they fell before him. If Isaac had not joined Abraham, they would not have been annihilated, as is written: *The wicked are silenced in darkness, for not by might does one prevail*.[399] Although might always manifests

on the right,[400] if it had not been encompassed by the left side,[401] they would not have been vanquished.

"Alternatively, *He guards the feet of His faithful one*. When a person loves the blessed Holy One, the blessed Holy One loves him in whatever he does, guarding his path, as is said: *YHVH will guard your going and your coming now and forever* (Psalms 121:8).

"Come and see how intensely Abraham loved the blessed Holy One! Wherever he went, he cared nothing about himself, [113a] only about cleaving to the blessed Holy One. So, *He guards the feet of His faithful one*—his wife,[402] as is written: *Abimelech had not come near her* (Genesis 20:4), and similarly: *Therefore I did not let you touch her* (ibid., 6). Concerning Pharaoh, what is written? *YHVH plagued Pharaoh… על דבר* (*al devar*), *at the word of* [*Sarai, Abram's wife*] (ibid. 12:17)—when she spoke, the blessed Holy One struck.[403] So, *He guards the feet of His faithful one*.

"*But the wicked are silenced in darkness*—Pharaoh and Abimelech, upon whom the blessed Holy One executed judgment by night.

"*For not by might does a man prevail*. Who is *a man?* Abraham, as is written: *Now return the man's wife*."

YHVH attended to Sarah (Genesis 21:1).

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, "*He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of YHVH, and Satan standing at his right to accuse him* (Zechariah 3:1). This verse calls for contemplation.

"*He showed me Joshua the high priest*—Joshua son of Jehozadak.

"*Standing before the angel of YHVH*. Who is *the angel of YHVH?* Site of the bundle in which souls are bound,[404] where all souls of the righteous stand. This is *the angel of YHVH*.[405]

"*And Satan standing at his right to accuse him*—evil impulse, roaming the world to seize souls, pluck away spirits, seduce and accuse creatures above and below.[406]

"This happened when Nebuchadnezzar cast him into the fire along with those false prophets,[407] and this one[408] hurled accusations above, so that he would be burned with them. Such is his way, accusing only in time of danger[409] or when suffering afflicts the world—when he is empowered to seduce, accuse, and execute judgment, even unjustly, as is said: *Some are swept away by injustice* (Proverbs 13:23).[410]

"What does *to accuse him* mean? He said, 'Either they should all be saved, or they should all be burned!'[411] For once the Destroyer is empowered to destroy, the innocent is not spared amid the wicked.[412] Therefore when judgment looms over a city, a person should flee before being seized, for once the Destroyer begins, he handles innocent and wicked alike—especially here, since all three of them were together, and so he demanded that they all be burned or all be saved; for when a miracle is performed [113b], it is not enacted half-miracle, half-judgment, but rather entirely one: either miracle or judgment."

Rabbi Yose said to him, "No? But when the blessed Holy One split the sea for Israel, He tore it open for them so that they could walk through on dry land, while from the other side the waters surged back, drowning the others.[413] Manifesting as one: a miracle here, and judgment here—simultaneously!"[414]

He replied, "That's what was difficult for Him![415] For when the blessed Holy One enacts judgment and miracle as one, it does not happen in one place or one house, manifesting entirely as one. And if it does, it proves difficult for Him—for above, everything is enacted completely, as one: either miracle or judgment, in one place, not in half.[416]

"Therefore the blessed Holy One does not execute judgment upon the wicked until their guilt is complete, as is written: *for the guilt of the Amorites is not yet complete*

(Genesis 15:16), and similarly: *By exact measure, by exiling her You strive with her* (Isaiah 27:8).[417] So he accused Joshua, demanding that he be burned along with them,[418] until He said to him, *YHVH rebuke you, Satan!* (Zechariah, ibid., 2). Who said this to him? *The angel of YHVH*.[419]

"Now, if you say, '*YHVH said to Satan, "YHVH rebuke you, Satan!"*'[420]— come and see: so too with Moses at the bush, as is written: *The angel of YHVH appeared to him in a flame of fire* (Exodus 3:2), and then: *YHVH saw that he turned aside to see* (ibid., 4). Sometimes, *the angel of YHVH;* sometimes, *YHVH*.[421] So, He said to him, *YHVH rebuke you, Satan!*—and not: 'Behold, I rebuke you!'[422]

"Come and see: Similarly, on the day that judgment appears in the world[423] and the blessed Holy One sits on the Throne of Judgment, Satan appears, accusing and seducing above and below, to destroy the world and seize souls." Rabbi Shim'on was sitting, studying Torah, engaged in this verse: *The elders of that aty shall take a heifer… and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the wadi* (Deuteronomy 21:3–4).[424] "According to the law, one must break its neck with a hatchet."[425]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Why is this necessary?"

Rabbi Shim'on wept and said, "Woe to the world, lured after this one![426] For ever since the day on which that evil serpent [114a] enticed Adam and dominated all inhabitants of the world, he stands poised to seduce and accuse the world. The world cannot escape his punishment until King Messiah comes and the blessed Holy One raises those who sleep in the dust, as is written: *He will swallow up death forever*…. (Isaiah 25:8), and similarly: *I will eliminate the spirit of impurity from earth* (Zechariah 13:2). He bestrides this world to seize all human souls.

"Come and see! It is written: *If a corpse is found in the land*… (Deuteronomy, ibid., 1). Come and see: Souls of all inhabitants of the world depart at the hand of the Angel of Death. Now, if you say that this person's soul departed at

his hand—not so! Rather, the one who killed him removed his soul before his time had come for that Angel of Death to dominate him. So, *The land will not be purged* [*of the blood that is spilled upon it except by the blood of the one who spilled it*] (Numbers 35:33).[427] Isn't it enough that he stands poised to seduce the world gratuitously and accuse constantly,[428] that they should rob him of what is his to take? But the blessed Holy One feels compassion for His children, so they offer this calf to compensate for that human soul stolen from him, so that he not accuse the world.[429]

"Here we have learned a supernal mystery: Ox, cow, calf, heifer—all manifesting in supernal mystery, so with this he is compensated.[430] Correspondingly it is written: '*Our hands did not spill this blood* (Deuteronomy, ibid., 7), nor did we cause his death.'[431] Thereby he does not accuse them. For everything, the blessed Holy One offers advice to the world.

"Come and see: Similarly, on Rosh Hashanah—when judgment looms over the world—he stands poised to accuse. So Israel must arouse with a shofar, arousing a sound blended of fire, water, and air, becoming one,[432] trumpeting that sound from the shofar. The sound ascends to the site of the Throne of Judgment,[433] impinges on it and ascends. As soon as this sound arrives from below, the voice of Jacob[434] is attuned above, and the blessed Holy One [114b] is aroused to compassion. For just as Israel arouses below a single sound blended of fire, water, and air, issuing as one from the shofar, so too above a shofar is aroused,[435] and that sound blended of fire, water, and air harmonizes[436]—one issuing below, one above; so the world harmonizes, compassion prevails. Then that accuser is confounded.[437] Whereas he expects to accuse the world and prevail in judgment, once he sees compassion aroused, he becomes confounded, his strength sapped, unable to do anything. So the blessed Holy One judges the world

compassionately. For if you say that judgment is eliminated, not so! Rather, compassion joins judgment, and the world is judged compassionately.[438]

"Come and see what is written: *Blow the shofar at the new moon*, בכסא (*ba-kese*), *at the covering*,[439] *for our feast day* (Psalms 81:4). For the moon is concealed, since then this evil serpent rules, liable to harm the world.[440] But when compassion arouses, the moon ascends, removing herself, so he is confounded, unable to rule—removed so he cannot approach.[441] So on Rosh Hashanah one must confound him, like someone roused from sleep,[442] totally unaware. On Yom Kippur one must pacify and appease him with that goat offered to him, and then he turns into an advocate for Israel;[443] but on Rosh Hashanah he is confounded, unaware, unable to do anything. When he sees the arousal of compassion ascending from below,[444] compassion from above, and the moon ascending between them, he is confounded, totally unaware, powerless. So the blessed Holy One judges Israel compassionately, pities them, and makes Himself available throughout those ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to receive all those who return to Him[445]—forgiving their sins, deferring them until Yom Kippur.[446]

"Thus in every instance the blessed Holy One commands Israel to perform an act in order to evade being dominated by the one who must not dominate, to evade being dominated by judgment, so that they all may emerge innocent on earth [115a] through the compassion of a father toward his children. All depends on action and words, as we have established."[447]

And YHVH attended to Sarah as He had said (Genesis 21:1), for it is written: *At the appointed time I will return to you, when life is due, and Sarah will have a son* (ibid. 18:14). We have learned: *He attended to Sarah*—"attending" for the female, "remembering" for the male.[448] So, *And YHVH attended to Sarah as He had said*, for it is written: *I will*

surely return to you when life is due (Genesis 18:10).[449] The anonymous wording—*He said, "I will surely return to you when life is due"*—implies that it was He, no messenger.[450]

YHVH did for Sarah [*as He had spoken*] (ibid. 21:1). Since Scripture already stated: *And YHVH attended to Sarah*, why add: *YHVH did for Sarah?* However, we have learned: Fruit of the handiwork of the blessed Holy One issues from the river gushing forth from Eden. This is souls of the righteous;[451] this is the flux of destiny[452]—from which flow forth all fine blessings, rains of blessing, as is written: *to water the garden* (ibid. 2:10), watering from above below, for children depend on this flux of destiny, not on any other site.[453] So it is written: *And YHVH attended to Sarah*—"attending" alone; *YHVH did for Sarah*—"doing" is higher than this rung, as has been said, dependent on the flux.[454] Here "attending," here "doing," so *And YHVH, YHVH*, yet all is one.

Rabbi El'azar opened, "*Children are the heritage of YHVH, the fruit of the womb a reward* (Psalms 127:3). *The heritage of YHVH*—an inheritance to possess, never to be seized from him. For one who attains children in this world thereby gains entrance through the curtain of the world that is coming,[455] since the son whom one attains and leaves behind in this world entitles him to the world that is coming, enabling him to enter *the heritage of YHVH*.

"Who is *heritage of YHVH1* Land of the Living.[456] So David called the land of Israel—Land of the Living[457]—*heritage of YHVH*, as is written: *For they have banished me today from clinging to the heritage of YHVH, saying: 'Go, serve other gods'* (1 Samuel 26:19). So, *Children are the heritage of YHVH*. [115b] What entitles one to it? *Children*. If one attains them in this world, then *the fruit of the womb a reward*—a reward and fine share in that world derive from the fruit of the womb, through whom one attains that world.

"Come and see: *Children are the heritage of YHVH*—the heritage of fruit of the handiwork of the blessed Holy One

comes from above, from the Tree of Life,[458] whence one attains children, as is said: *From Me your fruit appears* (Hosea 14:9).[459]

"What is written? *Happy is the man who fills his quiver with them* (Psalms, ibid., 5)—*happy* in this world, *happy* in the world that is coming.

"*They will not be put to shame when they contend with enemies in the gate* (ibid.). Who are *enemies in the gate?* Masters of judgment,[460] for when the soul departs this world, so many masters of judgment confront him before he enters his place.

"*In the gate*—the gate that he will enter because he leaves guarantors in this world, by virtue of whom he gains entrance into that world.[461] So, *They will not be put to shame when they contend with enemies in the gate.*"

Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yose were walking on the way. Rabbi Yehudah said to Rabbi Yose, "Open your mouth,[462] since *Shekhinah* accompanies us! For whenever people engage in words of Torah, *Shekhinah* comes and joins, especially on the way,[463] since *Shekhinah* appears anticipatingly, preceding those who attain faith in the blessed Holy One."

Rabbi Yose opened, saying, "*Your wife like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house; your children like olive shoots around your table* (Psalms 128:3). *Your wife like a fruitful vine*. As long as the wife is concealed *in the recesses of your house*, not venturing outside, she remains chaste, fit to bear worthy children.[464]

"*Like a vine*. Just as a vine can be planted only with its species, not with any other, so a worthy woman will not generate saplings with another man. Just as a vine cannot be grafted with another tree, so too, a worthy woman.[465]

"See her reward: [116a] *your children like olive shoots*. Just as leaves of olive trees do not shed all year long—all of

them constantly attached—so too, *your children like olive shoots around your table*.[466]

"What is written next? *Behold, surely so will the man who reveres YHVH be blessed* (ibid., 4). Why הנה כי כן (*Hinneh ki khen*), *Behold, surely so*? The verse should read: הנה כן (*Hinneh khen*), *Behold, so*.[467] In order to amplify the meaning,[468] for from this we learn that as long as *Shekhinah* was concealed in Her site fittingly,[469] *your children*, as it were, *like olive shoots*—Israel, when they dwelled in the land. *Around your table*—eating, drinking, bringing offerings, and rejoicing before the blessed Holy One.[470] Through them, those above and below are blessed.[471]

"After *Shekhinah* departed, Israel were banished from their father's table,[472] scattered among the nations, crying out every day, no one caring—except for the blessed Holy One, as is written: *Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them* (Leviticus 26:44). We see how many holy ones of the Most High[473] died through harsh decrees, due entirely to the punishment of Torah,[474] which Israel failed to fulfill when they dwelled in the Holy Land.

"See what is written: *Because you did not serve YHVH your God in joy and gladness of heart for the abundance of everything* (Deuteronomy 28:47). This verse is a mystery: *Because you did not serve*—when the priests brought sacrifices and burnt offerings; this is *in joy*.[475] *And gladness of heart*—the Levites.[476] *For the abundance of everything*—Israel, in between them, absorbing blessings from all sides.[477]

"Similarly it is written: *You have magnified the nation, You have increased their joy* (Isaiah 9:2)—the priests. *They rejoice before You as in joy at the harvest* (ibid.)—Israel, blessed by the blessed Holy One with produce of the field, from all of which they offer a tithe. *As they exult when dividing plunder* (ibid.)—the Levites, who take a tithe from the threshing floor.

“Alternatively, *You have magnified the nation*—Israel, over whom hovers the faith of the blessed Holy One fittingly.[478] הגדלת (*Higdalta*), *You have increased, their joy*—rung of the supernal head, to which Abraham cleaved, גדול (*gadol*), great, and filled with joy.[479] *They rejoice before You*—[116b] when they ascend to cleave to You.[480] *As in joy at the harvest*—Assembly of Israel, for *joy at the harvest* is Hers.[481] *As they exult when dividing plunder*—other powers and chariots below, dividing plunder, tearing prey first of all.”[482]

Rabbi Yehudah opened, “*Time to act for YHVH; they have violated Your Torah* (Psalms 119:126). What does this mean: *Time to act for YHVH?* This has been established,[483] but *time* is Assembly of Israel,[484] who is called *time*, as is said: *He is not to come at just any time to the Sanctuary* (Leviticus 16:2). What does this mean: *He is not to come at just any time?* As is said: *To protect you from a strange woman* (Proverbs 7:5),[485] corresponding to: *They offered strange fire in the presence of YHVH* (Leviticus 10:1).[486]

“Why *time?* Because She has a fixed *time* for everything: drawing near, being illumined, uniting fittingly,[487] as is said: *As for me, may my prayer come to You, O YHVH, at a time of favor* (Psalms 69:14).[488]

לעשות (*La-asot*), *To act, for YHVH*, as is written: ויעש דוד (*Va-ya’as David*), *David made, a name* (2 Samuel 8:13), for whoever engages in Torah fashions and arrays this *time*, preparing Her to unite with the blessed Holy One.[489] Why all this? Because *they have violated Your Torah*. If they had not *violated Your Torah*, there would never have been separation from the blessed Holy One.”[490]

Rabbi Yose said, “Similarly, it is written: *I, YHVH, will hasten it* בעתה (*be-ittah*), *in its time* (Isaiah 60:22).[491] What is בעתה (*be-ittah*)? בעת ה (*Be-et he*), ‘In the time of *he*,’ when She rises from the dust;[492] then *I will hasten it.*”

Rabbi Yose continued, “Even so, Assembly of Israel lies in the dust for one day, no more!”[493]

Rabbi Yehudah said, “So they have declared, but come and see the mystery that I have learned: When Assembly of Israel was exiled from Her realm, letters of the Holy Name separated, as it were—ה (*he*) separating from ו (*vav*).[494] Since they separated, it is written: *I was dumb, silent* (Psalms 39:3), because *vav* departed from *he* and voice disappeared, so speech was silenced.[495] She therefore lies in the dust that entire day of *he*. What is that? Fifth millennium,[496] although She went into exile before the beginning of the fifth millennium[497]—mystery of *he*. When the sixth millennium arrives—mystery of [117a] *vav*[498]—*vav* will raise *he* at six times ten.[499] Then consummation of *vav*: ascending to ten, descending to five, fulfilled by ten six times, becoming sixty, to raise from the dust.[500] Every sixty years of that sixth millennium, *he* is invigorated, scaling its rungs. In the six hundredth year of the sixth,[501] springs of wisdom will open above, springs of wisdom below, and the world will prepare to enter the seventh, just like a person preparing on the sixth day, as the sun is about to set, to enter Sabbath.[502] Your mnemonic: *In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life… all the springs of the great abyss burst and the sluices of heaven were opened* (Genesis 7:11).”

Rabbi Yose said to him, “All this is longer than the Companions have established, namely, one day of exile for Assembly of Israel, no more, as is written: *He has made me desolate, faint all the day* (Lamentations 1:13).”[503]

He replied, “So I learned from father in the mysteries of letters of the Holy Name, the duration of the world and the days of Creation—all a single mystery.[504]

“Then the rainbow will appear in the cloud in radiant colors, like a woman adorning herself for her husband,[505] as is written: *I will see her, to remember the everlasting covenant…* (Genesis 9:16).[506] So they have established, and it is fine. *I will see her*—in her radiant colors fittingly. Then,

to remember the everlasting covenant. Who is *everlasting covenant?* Assembly of Israel.[507] Vav will join *he*,[508] who will rise from the dust, as is said: *She will be a sign of the covenant* (ibid., 13).

"Come and see: When *vav* arouses toward *he*, supernal wonders will arise in the world and the Reubenites will instigate wars throughout the world.[509] The blessed Holy One will raise Assembly of Israel from the dust, remembering Her. He will be present at Her side in exile for a count of *vav*, six times ten, ten years.[510] Then She will rise, vengeance will be wreaked upon the world, and the lowly will be exalted."

Rabbi Yose said to him, "Well spoken! For [117b] this is implied in the mystery of letters. We should not arouse any other calculations of the end, since in *The Book of Rav Yeiva Sava*[511] we find a similar calculation, as is written: *Then the land will desire* (Leviticus 26:34)[512]—mystery of *vav*, as is written: *I will remember My covenant with* יעקוב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob* (ibid., 42)—*vav*, all as one.[513] So, *I will remember*, and then, *I will remember the land* (ibid.)—Assembly of Israel. *Will desire*—the land will be desirable to the blessed Holy One.[514]

"But as for the one day of which the Companions have spoken,[515] it is certainly all hidden with the blessed Holy One, all discovered in the mystery of letters of the Holy Name,[516] for Rav Yeiva Sava revealed the exile through those letters,[517] and now through these letters it is revealed."[518]

He said to him,[519] "Come and see: Even when Sarah was attended by this rung,[520] it attended her only through the mystery of *vav*, as is written: ויהוה (*Va-YHVH*), *And YHVH, attended to Sarah,*[521] since all is encompassed by the mystery of vav, embracing all, revealing all.[522] For whatever is concealed reveals everything concealed; one who is revealed does not come and reveal what is concealed."[523]

Rabbi Yose said, “How long we must endure this exile until that time arrives! Yet the blessed Holy One makes everything depend upon returning—if they prove worthy or not—as that verse has been explained: *I, YHVH, will hasten it in its time*—if they are worthy, *I will hasten it;* if not, *in its time*.”[524]

They walked on. While they were walking, Rabbi Yose said, “Now I remember that one day I was sitting here with my father, and he said to me, ‘My son, when your days amount to sixty years, you are destined to discover in this place a treasure of supernal wisdom.’ Well, I have attained that total of days and have not found it. I wonder if these words we have spoken are the wisdom he mentioned!

“He also said to me, ‘When shafts of fire strike the white of your hands,[525] it will vanish from you.’

“I asked, ‘Father, how do you know?’

“He replied, ‘I know by these two birds passing over your head.’”

At this point Rabbi Yose went off and entered a cave. [118a] In its recesses he found a book wedged into the cleft of a rock.[526] He came out with it. As soon as he opened it, he saw seventy-two engravings of letters originally transmitted to Adam,[527] through which he discovered[528] all the wisdom of holy supernal beings and of all those behind the millstones revolving behind the curtain among supernal dazzling demons[529] and everything destined to come about in the world—until the day when a cloud will arise in the West, darkening the world.[530]

He called Rabbi Yehudah and they began to study that book. Before they had finished two or three sides[531] of those letters, they found themselves contemplating supernal wisdom. As they began penetrating the secrecy of the book, conversing with one another, a flame of fire and a whirlwind burst forth, striking their hands, and it vanished from them.

Rabbi Yose wept and said, “Perhaps, Heaven forbid, we are tainted by sin—or are unworthy of knowing this!”

When they came to Rabbi Shim’on and told him what had happened, he said to them, “Perhaps you engaged in calculating the Messianic end with those letters!”

They replied, “This we do not know, for everything is obliterated from our memory.”

Rabbi Shim’on said to them, “The blessed Holy One does not want this to be revealed openly to the world. But verging on the days of the Messiah, even children of the world are destined to find hidden treasures of wisdom, thereby discovering calculations of the end. At that time it will be revealed to all, as is written: *For then* (Zephaniah 3:9). What does *then* mean? When Assembly of Israel rises from the dust, raised by the blessed Holy One. Then *I will transform the language of the peoples into a pure one, so they may all call upon the name of* YHVH *and serve Him shoulder to shoulder* (ibid.).

“Come and see! Although it is written of Abraham: *Abram journeyed, continually journeying toward the Negev* (Genesis 12:9), and all his journeys were toward the South, where he was linked,[532] he did not attain his realm fittingly until Isaac was born.[533] As soon as Isaac was born, he attained his realm, joining with him, and they were linked [118b] with one another.[534] Therefore he—no one else—named him Isaac, so that water would merge with fire,[535] as is written: *Abraham named his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him: Isaac* (ibid. 21:3). Why *who was born to him*?.[536] Fire from water.”[537]

Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, מצחק (*metsaḥeq*), *playing* (Genesis 21:9).[538]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “Since the day Isaac was born, as long as Ishmael remained in Abraham’s house he did not attain a name.[539]

Wherever gold is found, scoria goes unmentioned.[540] So, *the son of Hagar the Egyptian*, a male unworthy of being mentioned in the presence of Isaac."

Rabbi El'azar said, "*Sarah saw*. She saw him through a contemptuous eye, eyeing him not as the son of Abraham but as the son of *Hagar the Egyptian*. So, *Sarah saw*. Sarah saw him with that eye—not Abraham, since in relation to Abraham it is not written: *son of Hagar the Egyptian*, but rather: *his son*. Come and see what is written afterward: *The matter was very bad in Abraham's eyes because of his son* (ibid., 11), not: *because of the son of Hagar the Egyptian*. So, *Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian*, not seeing that he was the son of Abraham."

Rabbi Shim'on said, "This verse speaks in praise of Sarah. Seeing him מצחק (*metsaḥeq*), reveling, in idolatry,[541] she said, 'This is certainly not the son of Abraham, imitating him, but rather the son of *Hagar the Egyptian*, reverting to the pattern of his mother. So, *She said to Abraham, 'Cast out this maidservant and her son, for the son of this maidservant will not inherit with my son, with Isaac!'* (ibid., 10).

"Now, would you ever imagine that Sarah was jealous of her or her son? If so, the blessed Holy One would not have consented to her, as is written: *Whatever Sarah tells you, hearken to her voice* (ibid., 12). Rather, because she saw him engaging in idolatry and because his mother taught him idolatrous customs, Sarah said, *'For the son of this maidservant will not inherit!* I know he will never inherit the share of faith, nor will he share a portion with my son—neither in this world nor in the world that is coming.' Therefore the blessed Holy One consented.

"The blessed Holy One sought to separate holy seed fittingly, since that was why He created the world, for Israel arose in the will of the blessed Holy One before the world was created.[542] Therefore Abraham issued into the world,[543] and the world was sustained for his sake.[544]

Abraham and Isaac arose but did not settle in their sites until Jacob issued into the world.[545] Once he did, Abraham and Isaac became firmly established—and the entire world as well. From there the holy people issued into the world, and all was established fittingly, corresponding to the sacred pattern.

"Therefore the blessed Holy One said to him, *Whatever Sarah tells you, hearken to her voice, because through Isaac seed will be named for you* (ibid.)—not through Ishmael. What is written afterward? *She went and strayed in the wilderness of Beer-sheba* (ibid., 14). Here is written: ותתע (*va-teta*), *and strayed*, and there is written: *They are vanity, work* תעתועים (*ta'tu'im*), *delusion* (Jeremiah 10:15).[546] Yet for the sake of Abraham, the blessed Holy One did not abandon them, neither her nor her son.[547]

"Come and see: At first, when she fled from Sarah, what is written: *God has seen your suffering* (Genesis 16:11).[548] Now that she strayed after idolatry, although it is written: *She raised her voice and wept* (ibid. 21:16), what is written next? *For God has heard the voice of the boy* (ibid., 17)—and not: *For God has heard your voice*.[549]

"*There where he is* (ibid.).[550] They have established that he was not culpable above, for the Lower Court imposes punishment from thirteen years and higher, while the Higher Court from twenty years and onward.[551] So even though he was guilty, he was not culpable, as they have established, corresponding to what is written: *there where he is*." [552]

Rabbi El'azar said, "If so, one who departs the world before reaching the age of twenty, from where does his punishment derive?[553] True, if he is less than thirteen, he is culpable for the sins of his father.[554] But if he is older than thirteen,[555] then what?"

He replied, "The blessed Holy One feels compassion for him, that he may die innocent and be well rewarded in that

world, instead of dying guilty and being punished in that world, as we have established."[556]

He asked, "What if he is guilty and has not yet reached the age of [119a] twenty? Since he has departed the world, by whom is he punished?"[557]

He replied, "Through this one is fulfilled: *Some are swept away without judgment* (Proverbs 13:23).[558] For when punishment descends upon the world, he encounters that Destroyer—unintentionally, above or below—and is punished, as no one watches over him from above.[559] Of him is written: *His own iniquities will ensnare* את (*et*) *the wicked* (ibid. 5:22). את (*Et*), amplifying the meaning[560] to include one who has not yet reached the age of culpability. *His own iniquities will ensnare him*—not the Higher Court; *he will be caught in the ropes of his sin*—not by the Lower Court.

"So it is written: *For God has heard the voice of the boy there where he is.*"[561]

Rabbi Shim'on opened, "*I will remember My covenant with* יעקוב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob* (Leviticus 26:42)—spelled with a ו (*vav*),[562] why? Because of a double-aspected mystery of wisdom. First, mystery of a rung of wisdom, realm of Jacob.[563] But this verse was spoken regarding the exile of Israel, for though they are in exile, they will eventually be attended by Jacob, in the mystery of vav, namely, the sixth millennium.[564]

"Attending in *vav* lasts six moments and half a time.[565] When sixty years have passed over the threshold of the sixth millennium,[566] the God of Heaven will begin attending the daughter of Jacob. From then until she is fully remembered, six and a half years;[567] from then, six more years, totaling seventy-three.[568]

"In sixty-six,[569] King Messiah will appear in the land of Galilee.[570] One star in the East will swallow seven stars in the North,[571] and a flame of black fire will dangle in the sky

for sixty days. Wars will be instigated in the North, in which two kings will fall. All nations will join in battle against the daughter of Jacob, to drive her from the world. Of that time is written: *It is a time of distress for Jacob, but he will be delivered from it* (Jeremiah 30:7).

"Then souls will be depleted from the body[572] and will need to be renewed. Your mnemonic: *All the souls of the house of Jacob who came to Egypt numbered sixty-six* (Genesis 46:26–27).[573]

"In seventy-three[574] all kings of the world will assemble in the metropolis of Rome, and the blessed Holy One will pelt them with fire and hailstones[575] until they are annihilated—except for those kings not reaching there, retreating to wage other wars.

"Beginning then, King Messiah will arouse throughout the world. Countless nations and armies from all ends of the earth will throng around him. All the Children of Israel will gather in all those places until the years total one hundred.[576] Then ו (*vav*) will join ה (*he*);[577] then *they will bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to YHVH*… (Isaiah 66:20).[578]

"The Ishmaelites are destined at that time to incite all nations of the world to attack Jerusalem,[579] as is written: *I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem for war* (Zechariah 14:2), and similarly, *Kings of the earth station themselves and rulers take counsel together against YHVH and His anointed* (Psalms 2:2). What is written next? *He who sits in heaven laughs; YHVH mocks at them* (ibid., 4).

"Afterward, small *vav* will arouse to unite, renewing souls that were ancient, rejuvenating the world.[580] This is the meaning of: *May the glory of YHVH endure forever*—uniting fittingly.[581] *May YHVH rejoice in His works* (Psalms 104:31)—bringing them down to the world,[582] so that they all become new creatures, uniting all worlds as one.

"Happy are all those remaining in the world at the end of the sixth millennium to enter the Sabbath![583] For that is

the one day for the blessed Holy One alone,[584] to couple fittingly,[585] culling new souls to join those already in the world, as is written: *Whoever is left in Zion, who remains in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are inscribed for life in Jerusalem* (Isaiah 4:3).[586]

It came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am" (Genesis 22:1).

Rabbi Yehudah opened, "*You are my King, O God; command salvation for Jacob* (Psalms 44:5). מלכי אלהים אתה הוא (*Attah hu malki Elohim*), *You are my King, O God*—totality of all rungs as one, with one another.[587] *Command salvation for Jacob*—may all messengers[588] performing missions [119b] in the world be from the side of compassion, not from the side of judgment.[589] For emissaries issue either from the side of compassion or from the side of strict judgment. Those coming from the side of compassion never perform missions of judgment in the world.[590]

"Now, you might say, 'Look at the angel who appeared to Balaam! We have learned that he was a messenger of compassion who transformed into judgment.'[591]

"No, he never changed. Rather, he was a messenger of compassion, protecting Israel and serving as their advocate, while toward him he was judgment.[592] Such is the way of the blessed Holy One: when He performs goodness for one, that very goodness is judgment for another. So, this was a messenger of compassion for Israel, while for Balaam he transformed into judgment. So, *Command salvation for Jacob*. David said, 'Command the world that when messengers are sent, they be from the side of compassion!'"

Rabbi Abba said, "*Command salvation for Jacob*, for they are in exile.[593] May redemption manifest in the midst

of their exile!

"Come and see: Jacob was Glory of the Patriarchs,[594] but if not for Isaac, Jacob would never have appeared in the world. So, *Command salvation for Jacob*—Isaac, since once Isaac was saved, this was *salvation for Jacob*."

ויהי (*Vayhi*), *It came to pass, after these* דברים (*devarim*), *things*.

Rabbi Shim'on said, "We have learned that the expression *It came to pass in the days of* denotes sorrow, while the phrase ויהי (*Vayhi*), *It came to pass*—even without *in the days of*—is tinged with sorrow.[595]

"*It came to pass after* the lowest of all upper rungs. Who is that? *Devarim*,[596] as is said: *I am not a man of devarim, words* (Exodus 4:10).[597] Who came after this rung? *Elohim tested Abraham*, for the evil impulse came to accuse in the presence of the blessed Holy One.[598]

"Here we should contemplate: *Elohim tested Abraham*. The verse should read: *tested Isaac*, since Isaac was already thirty-seven years old[599] and his father was no longer responsible for him. If Isaac had said, 'I refuse,' his father would not have been punished. So why is it written: *Elohim tested Abraham*, and not *Elohim tested Isaac*?

"But *Abraham*, precisely! For he had to be encompassed by judgment, since previously Abraham had contained no judgment at all.[600] Now water was embraced by fire.[601] Abraham had been incomplete until now, when he was crowned to execute judgment, arraying it in its realm.[602] His whole life long he had been incomplete until now when water was completed by fire, fire by water.[603]

"So, *Elohim tested Abraham*—not *Isaac*—calling him to be embraced by judgment. When he did so, fire entered water, becoming complete. One was judged, one executed judgment—encompassing one another.[604] Therefore the evil impulse came to accuse Abraham, who was incomplete until he executed judgment upon Isaac.[605] For the evil impulse appears *after devarim*, coming to accuse.

“Come and see the mystery of the word: Although we have said that *Abraham* is written, not *Isaac*, Isaac is encompassed by this verse through the mysterious wording: *Elohim tested* את (*et*) *Abraham*. It is not written: *tested* לאברהם (*le-Avraham*), *Abraham*, but rather: *tested et* Abraham—*et*, precisely![606] This is Isaac, for at that time he dwelled in low power.[607] As soon as he was bound on the altar, initiated into judgment fittingly by Abraham, he was crowned in his realm alongside Abraham[608]—fire and water encompassing one another, ascending. Then division became apparent: water versus fire.[609]

“Who would have a created a compassionate father who turned cruel? It was only so that division would manifest: water versus fire, crowned in their realms, until Jacob appeared and everything harmonized—triad of patriarchs completed, above and below arrayed.[610]

“*He said, ‘Take your son’* (Genesis 22:2).[611] Now, how could Abraham do that? He was an old man! If you say that Isaac was still completely under his authority, fine. But this corresponds to what is said: *Take Aaron and his son Eleazar* (Numbers 20:25), which really means to coax with words,[612] conducting them toward the will of the blessed Holy One. Here too, *take* with words.

“*Your son—your only one, whom you love, Isaac* (Genesis, ibid.). [120a] This has been established.[613]

“*And go forth to the land of Moriah* (ibid.), as is said: *I will go forth to the mountain of myrrh* (Song of Songs 4:6), to be enhanced in an appropriate site.[614]

“On *the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from afar* (Genesis, ibid., 4). *On the third day*. They have already established this,[615] but since it is said: *He rose and went to the place of which God had told him* (ibid., 3),[616] why: *On the third day…he saw the place from afar*?.[617] Because it is written: *Through Isaac, seed will be*

named for you (ibid. 21:12), namely, Jacob, who issued from him; this is *the third day*.[618]

"*He saw the place from afar*, as is said: *From afar, YHVH appeared to me* (Jeremiah 31:2).[619]

"*He saw the place*—Jacob, of whom is written: *He took one of the stones of the place* (Genesis 28:11).[620]

"Abraham gazed at *the third day*—third rung—and saw Jacob, destined to issue from him.[621] *From afar*, as we have said. *From afar*, not soon."

Rabbi El'azar asked him, "What is so admirable about Abraham if he gazed and saw that Jacob was destined to issue from him? For look, as he was about to bind Isaac, this is not very laudable!"[622]

He replied, "He certainly did see Jacob, for previously Abraham had discovered wisdom, and now he gazed at *the third day*—third rung—consummating.[623] Then he saw Jacob, as is written: *He saw the place*—but now existing for him *from afar*, because he was going to bind Isaac and did not want to harbor suspicions against the blessed Holy One.[624]

"He saw him *from afar*—only through a dim lens, thus seeing him obscurely; for if a clear lens had been positioned over this dim lens, Abraham would have perceived him accurately.[625] But he appeared only *from afar*.

"Why did the clear lens retract during this event? Because this was the rung of Jacob, and since Jacob was not yet born, it did not appear now on this rung.[626] Further, so that he would go and be rewarded.[627]

"*He saw the place*—Jacob, as has been said. *From afar*—for he never succeeded in seeing him with his own eyes in this world, only *from afar*—through this rung, since when Jacob arrived, Abraham had already died and departed the world.[628] *He saw the place from afar*, not otherwise.

"*They came to the place of which God had told him, and Abraham built an altar there* (ibid. 22:9).[629] Here is

intimated: Although they attained that vision and saw Jacob, Abraham said, 'Surely the blessed Holy One knows another appropriate way.'[630] Immediately, *Abraham built an altar there*….

"What is written above? *Isaac said to Abraham his father, 'My father!'* (ibid, 7). They have already established this,[631] but why didn't he answer him at all?[632] Because he had withdrawn from a father's compassion for his son, so it is written: *'Here I am, my son'* (ibid.). *Here I am*—compassion has vanished, transformed into judgment.[633]

"*Abraham said* (ibid., 8),[634] and it is not written: *His father said*, for he did not appear as a father but rather as his adversary.

"*God will provide Himself the sheep* (ibid.). The verse should read: *will provide us the sheep*. Why *will provide Himself*? Because he was really telling him: *'God will provide for Himself* when He needs to, but now: *my son*, not a sheep.'[635] Immediately, *the two of them walked on together* (ibid.)."

Rabbi Shim'on opened, "*Behold, the valiant cried outside; angels of peace weep bitterly* (Isaiah 33:7). *Behold, the valiant*—supernal angels. *Cried* at that moment,[636] seeking to comprehend the word that is written: *He took him outside* (Genesis 15:5).[637] So they *cried outside*.

"*Angels of* שלום (*shalom*), *peace*—other angels destined to escort Jacob, for whose sake the blessed Holy One promised them שלימו (*shelimu*), wholeness, as is written: *Jacob went on his way, and angels of God encountered him* (ibid. 32:2), namely, *angels of shalom*.

"All of them wept when they saw Abraham binding Isaac; above and below trembled, all for Isaac.

"*An angel of YHVH called…'Abraham! Abraham!'* (ibid. 22:11)—separated by a punctuation mark, for the latter Abraham was unlike the former: the latter, [120b] complete; the former, incomplete.[638] Similarly, *Samuel!*

Samuel! (1 Samuel 3:10): the latter, complete; the former, incomplete; the latter, a prophet; the former, not a prophet.[639] But *Moses! Moses!*—unseparated—because from the day he was born, *Shekhinah* never departed from him."[640]

Abraham! Abraham!

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "To arouse him with another spirit, another act, another heart."[641]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Isaac was sifted, ascending favorably in the presence of the blessed Holy One[642]—like the fragrance of burning incense offered before Him by the priests twice a day—and the sacrifice was consummated. For Abraham agonized when he was told, *Do not lay your hand on the boy, do not do anything to him!* (Genesis, ibid., 12), thinking that his offering was incomplete, that he had built an altar and arranged everything in vain. Immediately, *Abraham raised his eyes and saw: here, a ram…* (ibid., 13).[643]

"We have learned that this was the ram created at twilight,[644] and it was in its first year, as is said: *one lamb in its first year…* (Numbers 7:15), as it must be.[645] You say it was created at twilight? But Isaac was not yet in the world![646] Rather, a force was ordained so that this sheep would appear at the moment Abraham needed it.[647] With each of those twilight entities, a force was empowered for it to manifest the moment it was needed. Similarly, this ram, offered in place of Isaac."

He opened, saying, "*In all their affliction* לֹא צָר (*lo tsar*), *He did not afflict, and the angel of His presence saved them* (Isaiah 63:9).

"Come and see: *In all* of Israel's *affliction*, when trouble befalls them, לֹא (*lo*)—written with an א (*alef*) but read with a ו (*vav*), for the blessed Holy One shares in their affliction.[648]

“לא (*Lo*), with an א (*alef*), an extremely high realm, beyond agitation or affliction—there, above, Israel’s affliction reaches.[649]

“לא (*Lo*), with an א (*alef*), as is said: *He made us*, ולא (*ve-lo*), *and not, we ourselves* (Psalms 100:3)—written with an א (*alef*) but read with a ו (*vav*).[650]

“*And the angel of His presence saved them*. But He shares in that affliction, so how can you say: *saved them*?[651] However, it is not written: *saves them*, but rather: *saved them*, already, for He is right there in that affliction, suffering with them.[652]

“Come and see: Whenever Israel is in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanies them, as they have established, for it is written: ושב יהוה אלהיך (*Ve-shav YHVH Elohekha*), *YHVH your God will return*, [*with*] *your captivity and have compassion on you…* (Deuteronomy 30:3).[653]

“Alternatively, *And the angel of His presence saved them—Shekhinah,*[654] who accompanies them in exile. But how can you say that he *saved them*?[655] Yet certainly so! These are pledges of the blessed Holy One in exile, and since *Shekhinah* is with them, the blessed Holy One remembers to help them and bring them forth from exile,[656] as is written: *I have remembered My covenant* (Exodus 6:5), first,[657] and then: *Here, the cry of the Children of Israel has come to Me* (ibid. 3:9).[658]

“*And I have also seen* (ibid.)[659]—amplifying the meaning to include another,[660] first of all, for it is written: *God remembered His covenant* (Exodus 2:24)—*Shekhinah*.[661]

“את אברהם (*Et Avraham*), *With Abraham* (ibid.).[662] Why *et Avraham*? The verse should read: לאברהם (*le-Avraham*), *with Abraham*.[663] But את אברהם (*et Avraham*), *with Abraham*, implies Her union and coupling with the patriarchs.[664] *Et Avraham*—Southwest;[665] את יצחק (*et Yitsḥaq*), *with Isaac* (ibid.)—Northwest;[666] ואת יעקב (*ve-et Ya’aqov*), *and with Jacob* (ibid.)—single coupling, single totality, a coupling fittingly complete.[667]

“Similarly, את השמים ואת הארץ (*et ha-shamayim ve-et ha-arets*), *the heavens and the earth* (Genesis 1:1)—*et ha-shamayim, the heavens*, totality of attribute of night with day; *ve-et ha-arets, and the earth*—attribute of day with night, as one.[668] Here too, with all of them: *et*, while with Jacob: *ve-et*, so that all would be a single coupling, male and female inseparable eternally.

“The blessed Holy One will one day send forth a voice, proclaiming throughout the world: *He said, ‘Surely they are My people, children who will not be false.’ So He became their savior* (Isaiah 63:8).”[669]

פרשת חיי שרה

Parashat Ḥayyei Sarah

“SARAH’S LIFE” (GENESIS 23:1–25:18)

Sarah’s life endured one hundred years
and twenty years and seven years (Genesis 23:1).

Rabbi Yose opened, “*They picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea stood still from raging* (Jonah 1:15). Here we should contemplate: Why was it the sea—and not the land—that raged against Jonah, seeing that he fled so *Shekhinah* would not rest upon him?[1] Why did the sea seize him as he fled?

“But surely the event was appropriately situated. The sea resembles the sky, we have learned, and the sky, the Throne of Glory.[2] So the sea seized him and held him tight. From the sea he fled,[3] so the sea attacked him in its domain.

“*They picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea*. We have learned that they seized him and plunged him into the water up to his thighs, and the sea subsided. They lifted him out[4] and it raged. The deeper they plunged him, the more it subsided, until finally he said, *Pick me up and throw me into the sea* (ibid., 12). Immediately, *they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea*.[5]

“As soon as he was cast into the sea, his soul flew off, ascending to the King’s Throne of Glory, where she was brought to judgment. Then his soul was restored to him, and he entered the mouth of that fish.[6] The fish died and then came back to life, as they have established.[7] [121b]

“Come and see: Every single night when a person climbs into bed, his soul leaves him, to be judged before the King’s Court of Justice.[8] If deserving to endure, she is restored to this world.

“Judgment manifests in two modes. A person is not judged for wrongdoing he will commit in the future, as is written: *For God has heard the voice of the boy there where he is* (Genesis 21:17).[9] But do not say that he is judged only for the good deeds he has already performed. Not so! Rather, also for good deeds he will eventually perform, on account of which he is saved, even though now he is guilty.[10] For the blessed Holy One deals kindly with all creatures, and all His ways benefit all; He does not judge a person for the wrong that he will someday commit. Therefore a person is judged in the presence of the blessed Holy One.[11]

“Come and see: As soon as they cast Jonah into the sea, what is written? *The sea stood still from raging*. What does *stood still* mean? Stood firm fittingly. ‘Standing’ signifies assuagement of wrath. When judgment prevails in the world, that Court of Justice[12] is like a pregnant woman undergoing hard labor[13]—once she gives birth, agitation subsides. Similarly, when judgment prevails in the world, it does not subside or rest until judgment is executed; then, tranquility—as She stands in position, perfect and firm, as is written: *When the wicked perish, jubilation!* (Proverbs 11:10). We have established this in light of what is written: *Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked?* (Ezekiel 18:23). Now, doesn’t this show that the blessed Holy One takes no pleasure in executing judgment upon the wicked? [14] But here, before the pint is full; there, afterwards.[15]

“*Sarah’s life endured*. What is different here about Sarah, whose death is described in the Torah, unlike all other women of the world, whose death is not described?”

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “No? Look at what is written: *Rachel died, and she was buried on the road to Ephrat* (Genesis 35:19), and similarly: *Miriam died there and was buried there* (Numbers 20:1), and similarly: *Deborah*, [122a] *Rebekah’s nurse, died* (Genesis, ibid., 8), and similarly: *Shua’s daughter, the wife of Judah, died* (ibid. 38:12)!”

Rabbi Yose replied, “Of none of them is written what is written of Sarah: *Sarah’s life endured one hundred years and twenty years and seven years: the years of Sarah’s life*. Regarding none of them are days and years enumerated, as with Sarah; to none of them is an entire portion devoted, as to Sarah.[16] But it is a mystery, by virtue of the rung upon which depend all human days and years.”[17]

He opened, saying, “*The abundance of the earth is in all, a king for a cultivated field* (Ecclesiastes 5:8). *The abundance of the earth is in all*, indeed, since from there issue spirits, souls, and benefit for the world.[18]

“*A king for a cultivated field*. Who is *a king*? The blessed Holy One.[19] *For a cultivated field*—when properly tilled.[20] *A king*—Supernal King,[21] who unites with the *field* when it is *cultivated*. Who is the *field*?. The field blessed by *YHVH*, as is written: *like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH* (Genesis 27:27),[22] for when it is completely *cultivated* and tilled, the Supernal King unites with it.”

Rabbi El’azar said, “*A king for a cultivated field*. How many nuances of supernal mystery are embedded here! *A king*—*Shekhinah*,[23] who does not inhabit a house, establishing Herself there, unless a man is married, coupling with her[24] to engender and yield fruit. Then She generates souls to dwell therein. So, לשדה נעבד (*le-sadeh ne’evad*), *for a cultivated field*, for none other.[25]

“Alternatively, *A king*—a woman in awe of *YHVH*, as is written: *A woman in awe of YHVH is to be praised* (Proverbs 31:30).[26]

"*Le-sadeh ne'evad, Enslaved to a field*—a strange woman, as is said: *to protect you from a strange woman* (Proverbs 7:5).[27]

"For there is a field, and then, there is a field![28] There is a field planted with all kinds of blessing and holiness, as is written: *like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH*. Then, there is a field planted with all kinds of destruction, defilement, desolation, killing, and war. Sometimes this *king* is *enslaved to* this *field*, and then this verse applies: *At three things the earth trembles:* [122b] *…at a slave who becomes king… and a slave-girl supplanting her mistress* (Proverbs 30:21–23).[29]

"The light of this king is concealed—darkened—until he is purified, uniting above.[30] Therefore, the goat of the new moon, for that field is isolated, lacking the king's blessings.[31] When he is *enslaved to a field*,[32] then this verse applies: *For in the field he found her; the engaged girl screamed*… (Deuteronomy 22:27).[33] *For in the field*, as has been said.[34]

"Come and see: Eve came into the world and clung to this serpent, who injected her with slime,[35] inflicting death upon the world.

"Sarah came, descended, and ascended, not clinging to him, as is said: *Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had* (Genesis 13:1).[36]

"When Noah came into the world, what is written? *He drank of the wine and became drunk, and exposed himself* (ibid. 9:21).[37]

"Since Abraham and Sarah did not embrace or cling to this site, Sarah attained supernal life for herself, her husband, and her descendants after her, as is written: *Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the quarry from which you were dug* (Isaiah 51:1).[38] So *Sarah's life endured*, for thereby she attained everything. Of no other woman is it written: *Her life endured*—for example, *Eve's*

life endured, or anyone else. This one cleaved to life, so life was hers.

"*Sarah's life endured*. Her entire life was supernal. *One hundred years*—supernal, *and twenty years*—supernal, *and seven years*—supernal, all fittingly."[39]

Rabbi Shim'on said, [123a] "Come and see the mystery of the word: Why the variation between all the others, where the verse reads: שנה (*shanah*), *year*, and these *seven*, where it reads: שנים (*shanim*), *years*, as is written: *One hundred shanah, year, and twenty shanah, year*, and then, *seven shanim, years*?[40]

"Because *one hundred shanah, year*, is totality of all, all encompassed in a *hundred*[41]—in the mystery of one hundred daily blessings.[42] Similarly, *twenty shanah, year*.[43] So it is written: *shanah, year*—mystery of singularity, unity, eternally inseparable.[44] *Seven years*—separating, diverging from concealed totality above, though all constitutes a single unity, yet separating into judgment and compassion in various directions and paths, unlike above. So of these *seven years* is written: *shanim, years*, not *shanah, year*.[45]

"They are all called 'life.' *Sarah's life endured*—really endured, created, abiding above!"[46]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "They have established this,[47] for when Isaac was bound he was thirty-seven years old;[48] and as soon as he was bound, Sarah died, as is written: *Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her* (Genesis 23:2). From where did he come? From Mount Moriah, after binding Isaac.[49] Those thirty-seven years from the day Isaac was born until the time he was bound were *Sarah's* true *life*, equivalent to the numerical value of ויהיו (*va-yihyu*), *it endured*[50]—it was thirty-seven years, corresponding to the span of time from when Isaac was born until he was bound."

Rabbi Yose opened, “*A psalm. Sing to YHVH a new song, for He has worked wonders*… (Psalms 98:1). The Companions have already established that this verse was uttered by cows, as is written: וישרנה הפרות (*Va-yishsharnah ha-parot*), *The cows went straight ahead, along the road* (1 Samuel 6:12).[51] What does *va-yishsharnah* mean? They were singing שירתא (*shirta*), a song. Which song did they sing? *A psalm. Sing to YHVH a new song, for He has worked wonders.*[52]

“Here one should contemplate, for everything created by the blessed Holy One chants praises and songs before Him, both on high and below.[53] Now, if you say they sang this song on their own, certainly so, for it is a mystery above! But they had the ark on their backs, and since they were carrying and elevating the ark, their singing did not slacken. For look, as soon as the ark was removed from them, they began lowing like all other cows and no longer sang! Certainly the ark [123b] on their backs made them sing.

“*A psalm*. We have already established that it is always written: *A psalm of David*, or *Of David, a psalm*.[54] Yet here, David is not mentioned at all! Because this psalm is destined to be sung by the Holy Spirit[55] when the blessed Holy One raises Israel from the dust. Then, *Sing to YHVH a new song;* then it will be *new*, for a song such as this has never been sung since the day the world was created.”[56]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “It is written: *There is nothing new under the sun* (Ecclesiastes 1:9), yet here this song is both *new* and *under the sun*, for it will exist under the sun. What is it? The moon, which will then be *new under the sun*.[57] Why? *For He has worked wonders*. What are those wonders? As is written: *His right hand and His holy arm have won Him victory* (Psalms, ibid.). *Have won* whom *victory*? [124a] The rung singing this song,[58] for by them it is supported, by right and left.[59] *Have won him victory*, indeed, the rung of this psalm. When? At the time when the

dead arise, awaking from the dust; then it will be *new*, never realized in this world."

Rabbi Yose said, "When the blessed Holy One wreaks vengeance on the world for the sake of Israel, this song will be sung. For afterward the dead will awake from the dust, and the world will be fully, vitally renewed—unlike before, when death prevailed in the world due to the serpent who inflicted death upon all,[60] defiling the world, darkening its face.

"Come and see what is written: *I will put enmity between you and the woman* (Genesis 3:15).[61] What is ואיבה (*ve-eivah*), *enmity*? As is said: *They pass away like skiffs of* אבה (*eveh*), *reed* (Job 9:26). For so many boats sail the immense ocean—boats and ships diverging from one another![62] The boats in which this serpent sails are called *skiffs of evah, enmity*.

"*Between you and the woman—a woman in awe of YHVH* (Proverbs 31:30).[63]

"*And between your seed* (Genesis, ibid.)—other nations.

"*And her seed* (ibid.)—Israel.

"*He will strike you at the head* (ibid.). *He*—the blessed Holy One, who will one day exterminate him from the world, as is written: *He will swallow up death forever* (Isaiah 25:8), and similarly: *I will eliminate the spirit of impurity from earth* (Zechariah 13:2).

"*At the head*—in the time to come, when the dead awaken, for then the world will be *at the head*, sustained by *the head*, supernal world.[64]

"*And you will strike him at the heel*—in this world now, *the heel*, unfulfilled, impermanent, so that serpent bites the world, besmirching creatures' faces.

"Come and see: The days of a human being are created and endure on those supernal rungs.[65] Once they cease existing on those rungs, as is written: *The days of our life are seventy years…* (Psalms 90:10),[66] from here on, there remains no rung on which to abide[67]—so *their*

extension[68] *is toil and sorrow* (ibid.), as if not existing. But the days of the righteous [124b] exist enduringly, as is said: *Sarah's life endured*, and similarly: *The days of the years of Abraham's life endured* (Genesis 25:7).[69]

"Now, you might say 'The same is also written of Ishmael: *The years of Ishmael's life endured* (ibid. 25:17).'[70] But he returned to God,[71] so of his days Scripture reads: *endured*."

Sarah died in Kiriath Arba (Genesis 23:2).[72] Rabbi Aḥa said, "Nothing like this appears regarding any other women of the world.[73] The enumeration of her days and years, her existence in the world, and the precise place where she was buried are recorded only to demonstrate that no other woman of the world was like Sarah.

"Now, you might say 'Look at Miriam, of whom is written: *Miriam died there and was buried there* (Numbers 20:1)!' But this comes to show the corruption of Israel, for whom water flowed only through the virtue of Miriam.[74] Yet her death is not described as is Sarah's."

Rabbi Yehudah opened, "*Happy are you, O land whose king is a son of free ones and whose princes feast at the proper time!* (Ecclesiastes 10:17). This verse has been established,[75] but we should contemplate it; for happy are Israel, to whom the blessed Holy One has given Torah—to discover all hidden paths, uncover supernal secrets!

"As has been said, *Happy are you, O land!*—Land of the Living,[76] for Her King[77] summons all blessings for Her: She is blessed by supernal Patriarchs—mystery of ו (*vav*)[78]—poised to pour blessings upon Her constantly. He is *a son of free ones,*[79] issuing from the supernal world, who continuously generates all life, all radiance, all anointing oil.[80] All this the firstborn son conducts to this *land*, as is

said: *My firstborn son is Israel* (Exodus 4:22).[81] So, *Happy are you, O land!*

"As to what is said: *Woe to you, O land whose king is a child!* (Ecclesiastes, ibid., 16), as has been established, for this *land* and world below suck only from the dominion directly above her,[82] and all of them from that king called *child*.[83] Woe to the land that has to suck this way!

"Come and see: This one[84] [125a] has nothing at all of his own, receiving blessings only at certain times. When these are withheld from him—since the moon is tainted and darkened[85]—woe to the world that has to suck at that time! Further, before sucking from him, this world is sentenced strictly; for all is established and arranged by justice, as has been established.

"Come and see: *Sarah died in Kiriath Arba*. This is a mystery, for her death was not caused by that sinuous serpent. Over her he had no dominion, as he does over other inhabitants of the world, who have died by his hand ever since Adam inflicted this upon them[86]—except for Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, of whom is written: *by the mouth of YHVH*, although out of respect for *Shekhinah*, this is not written of Miriam.[87]

"But of Sarah is written: בקריית ארבע (*be-Qiryat Arba*), *by Kiriath Arba*, City of Four,[88] mystery of קריית שמע (*qeriyyat Shema*), reciting *Shema*.[89] By supernal mystery, by no one else—*by Kiriath Arba*, not by the serpent.

"*By Kiriath Arba*, City of Four—*that is*, חברון (*Ḥevron*), *Hebron* (Genesis 23:2), for King David אתחבר (*itḥabbar*), joined, the patriarchs.[90] So her death was caused by no one else, rather by *Kiriath Arba*.

"Come and see: When the days of a human being abide on supernal rungs,[91] that human abides in the world. No longer abiding on supernal rungs, they depart and descend, approaching the rung inhabited by death. Then he obtains authorization and plucks out the soul,[92] swooping through the world in a single moment,[93] seizing souls, defiling the

body, which remains so. Happy are the righteous, who are undefiled and remain so![94]

"Come and see: In the middle of the sky, a lustrous[95] path is woven—Celestial Serpent—all gossamer stars clustered within, mounds upon mounds,[96] encharged with requiting[97] the deeds of inhabitants of the world.[98] Similarly, numerous bands of dazzling demons[99] issue from this supernal, primordial serpent—by whom Adam was seduced—and they are all encharged with requiting deeds of [125b] the world.

"So if a person comes to purify himself, he is assisted from above; his Lord's assistance encircles him, and he is protected, called 'holy.' If a person comes to defile himself, numerous bands of dazzling demons lie in wait for him; they all hover over him, surrounding him, defiling him, and he is called 'impure.'[100] They all go in front of him, proclaiming, 'Impure! Impure!'—as is said: *He shall call out, 'Impure! Impure!'* (Leviticus 13:45). All of them are linked with that primordial serpent, requiting countless deeds of the world."

Rabbi Yitsḥak and Rabbi Yose were walking from Tiberias to Lydda. Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "I am amazed at that wicked Balaam, all of whose actions stemmed from the side of impurity! Here we learn a mystery: All species of נחשיא (*naḥshayya*), sorcery,[101] throughout the world are linked with, and issue from, that primordial נחש (*naḥash*), serpent—slimy spirit of impurity. So all witchcraft of the world is named accordingly: נחשים (*neḥashim*), serpentine sorcery, all issuing from this side. Whoever is drawn here becomes defiled. Furthermore, he must defile himself in order to draw upon himself that side of impure spirit. For we have learned: As one arouses, so he draws upon himself from above.[102] If one arouses the side of holiness, he draws upon himself supernal holiness from above—and is sanctified. If one arouses the side of impurity, he draws upon himself a spirit of impurity—and is defiled. As already mentioned, we have

learned that if a person comes to defile himself, he is defiled.

"So in order to draw upon himself impure spirit from that supernal serpent, that wicked Balaam defiled himself every night with his donkey, engaging with her conjugally,[103] in order to become defiled and draw upon himself impure spirit; then he enacted his sorcery.

"To begin with, he would take one of those snakes and offer up incense before it. Then he split [126a] its head, extracted its tongue, took certain herbs, and burned everything—concocting incense. Next he took the snake's head, split it in four, and concocted another incense.[104] He traced a circle,[105] recited a formula, and performed further rites—until he had drawn upon himself impure spirits, who revealed to him what he needed. Through them he accomplished his acts, by their knowledge derived from that celestial serpent.[106] He continued his acts of sorcery until he had drawn upon himself a spirit from that primordial serpent. This is how he discovered and grasped knowledge of sorcery and divination; so it is written: *He did not go, as time after time, to encounter* נחשים (*neḥashim*), *serpentine sorceries* (Numbers 24:1)—*neḥashim*, serpents, literally! The essential root lies in impurity, as has been said; subsequently all begins solely with this."[107]

Rabbi Yose asked, "Why are all kinds of witchcraft and sorcery found especially in women?"[108]

He replied, "So we have learned: 'When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with slime'[109]—injecting her, not her husband."

He said, "Certainly so!"

He came and kissed him,[110] saying, "How many times have I asked this! Yet I have attained it only now!"

He asked him,[111] "All these practices, all of Balaam's knowledge—where did he learn it?"

He replied, "From his father.[112] But in those mountains of the East, land of the East, he mastered all kinds of

sorcery and divination—for in those mountains reside Uzza and Azael, whom the blessed Holy One had cast down from heaven. Bound in iron chains, they divulge sorcery to human beings;[113] so from there Balaam knew, as is said: *From Aram, Balak led me; Moab's king, from mountains of the East* (ibid. 23:7)."

He said,[114] "But it is written: *He did not go, as time after time, to encounter serpentine sorceries, but turned his face toward the wilderness.*"[115]

He replied, "Lower side emerging from impure spirit above, impure spirit ruling the wilderness[116]—the Children of Israel made the calf to defile themselves with it,[117] for it lies below. [126b] He engaged in every type of sorcery so that he could uproot Israel, but he could not."

Rabbi Yose said, "What you said at first—that when the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with slime—fine, but we have learned that when Israel stood at Mount Sinai, their slime ceased. Israel, who received Torah—their slime ceased; but other nations, who did not receive Torah—their slime did not cease."[118]

He replied, "Well spoken! But come and see: Torah was given only to males, as is written: *This is the Torah that Moses set before the sons of Israel* (Deuteronomy 4:44), for women are exempt from commandments of Torah.[119] Furthermore, after they sinned they all slipped back into their slime as before,[120] and it is harder to eliminate slime from a woman than from a man. So women are more commonly engaged in witchcraft and this slime than men, for women derive from the left side and cling to severe Judgment.[121] As has been said, this side clings to them more than to men, since they derive from the side of severe Judgment; everything clings to and follows its species.[122]

"Come and see, it is just as I said: Balaam first defiled himself to draw upon himself impure spirit.[123] Similarly, during the days of a woman's impurity, a man must beware of her, since she clings to impure spirit.[124] If during that

time she practices sorcery, she will succeed more than at any other time, for impure spirit abides with her. So whatever she approaches is defiled; all the more so, one who approaches her! Happy are Israel, to whom the blessed Holy One gave Torah, declaring: *Do not approach a woman during her menstrual impurity, exposing her nakedness* (Leviticus 18:19)."

He asked him, "One who contemplates the chirping of a bird—why is he called נחש (*naḥash*), serpentine sorcerer?"[125]

He replied, "Because it derives from that side, since impure spirit hovers over that bird, [127a] divulging worldly matters, and every impure spirit clings to the serpent before arriving in the world. No one in the world escapes him,[126] for he manifests in everything until the blessed Holy One someday eliminates him from the world, as is written: *He will swallow up death forever…* (Isaiah 25:8),[127] and similarly: *I will eliminate the spirit of impurity from earth* (Zechariah 13:2)."

Rabbi Yehudah said, "Abraham recognized a sign in that cave,[128] and there his heart's desire focused—for previously he had entered and seen Adam and Eve buried there.[129] How did he know it was them? Because as he gazed upon his image,[130] an opening to the Garden of Eden appeared, and that same image was standing nearby.[131]

"Come and see: Whoever gazes upon the image of Adam can never escape, for as a person departs this world he sees Adam and—that very moment—dies.[132] Yet Abraham gazed upon him, seeing his image, and endured. He saw a light illumining the cave and a lamp burning; then Abraham yearned to dwell in that site, and his heart's desire focused constantly on the cave.

"Come and see: Now Abraham acted wisely when he sought a burial site for Sarah. For look, when he asked, he did not ask right then for the cave, nor did he say that he wanted to separate himself from them! Rather, he said *Give*

me possession of a burial site among you, so I may bury my dead out of my sight (Genesis 23:4).

"Now, if you say that Ephron[133] wasn't there—yes, he was, for it is written: *Ephron was sitting among the Hittites* (ibid., 10). At that point Abraham didn't tell him anything, just what he told them all, as is written: *He spoke to the Hittites* (ibid., 3).

"Would you ever imagine that Abraham wanted to be buried among them, among the impure, or that he desired to mingle with them? Rather, he acted wisely; and from Abraham's action here we learn a lesson in [127b] tactfulness. Since he desired that cave intensely, though Ephron was right there he did not want to ask him immediately, displaying desire for the cave. Instead, he asked at first for something he didn't need[134]—addressing the others, not Ephron. Once they said to him in the presence of Ephron *'Listen to us, my lord! You are a prince of God among us. In the choicest of our burial sites bury your dead'* (ibid., 6), then what is written? *Ephron* יֹשֵׁב (*yoshev*) *was sitting, among the Hittites*, spelled: יָשַׁב (*yashav*), *sat*—he was there since the beginning of Abraham's words.[135] Then he said, *'Listen to me, and intercede for me with Ephron son of Zohar, so he will give me the cave of Machpelah* (ibid., 8–9). Now, if you think I don't want you because my honor exceeds yours, *among you*[136]—to be buried among you—for I do want you, not to be apart from you.'"

Rabbi El'azar said, "When Abraham entered the cave, how did it happen? He was running after that calf, as is written: *Abraham ran to the herd…* (ibid. 18:7), and the calf fled to that cave, so he entered after it and saw what he saw.[137]

"Further, he used to pray every day,[138] going out to that field, which emitted sublime fragrance. He saw a light radiating from the cave, so there he prayed, and there the

blessed Holy One spoke with him. Therefore he asked for it,[139] since his desire focused constantly on that site.

"You might ask, 'If so, why didn't he ask for it until now?' So they would not scrutinize him, seeing that he didn't need it.[140] Now that he needed it, he said, 'The time has come to request it.'

"Come and see: Didn't Ephron see in the cave what Abraham saw, convincing him never to sell it to him? Certainly he saw nothing at all, for an object is revealed only to its owner. So to Abraham it was revealed, not to Ephron; to Abraham it was revealed, for whom it was destined [128a]—not to Ephron, who had no share in it. So nothing was revealed to Ephron, who saw only darkness, which is why he sold it. He even sold what Abraham had not originally requested. For look, Abraham only said *so he will give me the cave of Machpelah…;* whereas he said *The field I give to you and the cave that is in it* (ibid. 23:11), for it all seemed disgusting to Ephron—since he didn't realize what it was![141]

"Come and see: When Abraham first entered the cave, he saw light; then dust scattered, revealing two graves. Meanwhile Adam arose in his image, saw Abraham, and smiled; so Abraham knew he was destined to be buried there.[142]

"Abraham said, 'Please tell me, Fortress Quaestor,[143] are you sequestered[144] here?'

"He replied, 'The blessed Holy One buried me here;[145] and ever since, I have been hidden in the skin of a sling[146] —until you came into the world. From now on—because of you—there is enduring ascension for me and the world!'[147]

"Look at what is written: *The field and the cave that was in it arose* (ibid., 20)—rising, literally, which it never had before!"[148]

Rabbi Abba said, "*The field arose*, literally, rising and ascending in the presence of Abraham—for until then,

nothing was visible there, but now what had been hidden rose and ascended, so all rose rightfully."

Rabbi Shim'on said, "When Abraham entered the cave, bringing in Sarah, Adam and Eve rose, refusing to be buried there. They exclaimed, 'Already we are ashamed in the presence of the blessed Holy One in that world because of the sin we engendered;[149] now, confronted by your good deeds, even more shame will be added!'

"Abraham replied, 'I am destined to appear before the blessed Holy One on your behalf, so that you will nevermore be ashamed in His presence.'

"Immediately, *After this Abraham buried* [128b] *his wife Sarah* (ibid., 19). What does *after this* mean? After Abraham had promised this.

"Adam entered his site, but Eve did not,[150] until Abraham approached and brought her in next to Adam, protesting to him on her behalf, as is written: *After this Abraham buried* את שרה (*et Sarah*), *Sarah, his wife*—not לשרה (*le-Sarah*) but et *Sarah*, amplifying the meaning to include Eve.[151] Then they settled in their sites fittingly, as is written: *These are the generations of heaven and earth* בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created* (Genesis 2:4). Do not read בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*, but rather באברהם (*be-Avraham*), through Abraham.[152] *The generations of heaven and earth*—Adam and Eve. It is not written: *These are heaven and earth*, but rather: *the generations of heaven and earth*, not the generations of human beings.[153] They were established on account of Abraham. How do we know? As is written: *The field and the cave that was in it were established for Abraham*.[154] Until Abraham appeared, Adam and Eve were not established in their sites in that world."

Rabbi El'azar asked Rabbi Shim'on, "Isn't this cave double? For look at what is written: מערת המכפלה (*me'arat ha-makhpelah*), *the double cave* (ibid. 23:9).[155] Yet later, Scripture names it

the cave of the field of Machpelah (ibid., 19)—calling the field *double*![156]

He replied, "So it is called: *the cave of Machpelah*, as is said: *so he will give me the cave of Machpelah* (ibid., 9); but really, by your life, the cave is not *double* nor is the field called *double*. Rather, this cave and field are named for *Machpelah: the field of Machpelah*—precisely, not the cave—because the cave lies in the field, and that field abides in something else.

"Come and see: The entire land of Israel אתכפל (*itkephal*), is enfolded, within Jerusalem,[157] which exists both above and below.[158] Similarly, Jerusalem above, Jerusalem below; linked above, linked below. Jerusalem above, linked in two directions: above and below;[159] Jerusalem below, linked in two directions: below and above.[160] So She is double,[161] and this field derives from that double, abiding there.

"Similarly it is written: *like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH* (ibid. 27:27),[162] above [129a] and below. So, *the field of double*, literally, not 'the double field.'

"Further, mystery of the word: *the field of double*, literally! Who is *double*? ה (*He*) of the holy name, who is *double*,[163] yet all abiding in one. For Her the verse reads secretly המכפלה (*ha-makhpelah, he makhpelah*), *double he*, for this is the only double letter in the holy name.

"Even though it really was a double cave, a cave within a cave,[164] it was called *cave of the field of Machpelah* for another reason, as already explained. Abraham knew; and when speaking to the Hittites, he concealed the matter, saying: *so he will give me the cave of Machpelah*, since it was a double cave, while Torah calls it *the cave of the field of Machpelah*, fittingly.[165]

"The blessed Holy One has formed everything so that this world corresponds to the pattern above,[166] so that one cleaves to the other, so that His glory manifests above and below. Happy is the share of the righteous—in whom the

blessed Holy One delights—in this world and the world that is coming!"

Abraham was old, בא בימים (*ba ba-yamim*), *coming into days…* (Genesis 24:1).[167]

Rabbi Yehudah opened, "*Happy is the one You choose and draw near, so he may dwell in Your courts!* (Psalms 65:5). This verse has been discussed;[168] but happy is the human whose ways are found fit in the presence of the blessed Holy One—and whom He desires, drawing him near.

"Come and see: Abraham drew near to Him; throughout all his days his desire and delight focused on this. He did not draw near in a single day, in a single moment; rather, his deeds drew him near,[169] drawing nearer every day—rung by rung[170]—finally attaining his rungs when he was old, entering supernal rungs fittingly, as is written: *Abraham was old*, and then: *coming into days*—into those supernal days, those days known in the mystery of faith.[171]

"*And YHVH blessed Abraham with everything*, since from there issue all blessings, all goodness.[172]

"Happy are those masters of return![173] For in a single hour, a single day, a single moment [129b] they draw near the blessed Holy One—which is not so even with the completely righteous, who draw near over many years.[174] Abraham did not enter those supernal days until he was old, as has been explained. Similarly, David, as is written: *King David was old, coming into days* (1 Kings 1:1). But a master of return enters immediately, cleaving to the blessed Holy One."

Rabbi Yose said, "We have learned: 'In the place in that world where masters of return stand, the completely righteous are not allowed to stand'[175]—for they are closer to the King than anyone, drawing the flow upon themselves so passionately and intensely to approach the King.[176]

“Come and see how many places are prepared by the blessed Holy One in that world! In each of them, a dwelling for the righteous—every single one according to his rung, fittingly.[177]

“It is written: *Happy is the one You choose and draw near*—drawn near by the blessed Holy One, those souls ascending from below to above to possess the inheritance prepared for them.

“*So he may dwell in Your courts*—those outer sites and rungs.[178] Who are they?[179] As is said: *I will give you free access among these standing here* (Zechariah 3:7)[180]—a rung among supernal holy ones. Those who attain this rung become messengers of the world like angels,[181] constantly carrying out a mission according to the will of their Master, because they constantly sanctified themselves and did not become defiled.

“Correspondingly, whoever becomes defiled in this world[182] draws upon himself impure spirits, and when his soul leaves him, she is defiled, her abode located among those impure ones.[183] These become demons of the world.[184] As a person conducts himself in this world, so is his abode, so is he drawn within that world—and those impure spirits defile him, conducting him to Hell.

“Come and see: One who sanctifies himself in this world, guarding himself against defilement, finds his abode in that world among those supernal holy ones, [130a] constantly carrying out a mission. These stand in the court, as is said: *court of the Dwelling* (Exodus 27:9),[185] while others are situated further within, not in the court but in the house,[186] as is said: *May we be sated with the goodness of Your house* (Psalms, ibid.).

“David said: *May we be sated with the goodness of Your house*. Since he said: *so he may dwell in Your courts*, why is it written: *May we be sated*? He should have said: *May he be sated*, corresponding to: *so he may dwell*.[187] But we

have already learned: ‘Seating is available in the Enclosure only for kings of the House of David.’[188]

“Then there is a site for supernal devotees who enter within.[189] Who are they? As is written: *those encamping in front of the Dwelling to the east, in front of the Tent of Meeting toward the rising of the sun*… (Numbers 3:38).

“Abodes upon abodes, lights beyond lights, diverging—each put to shame by the light of his companion.[190] Just as deeds diverge, so realms and lights diverge in that world.

“Come and see: Even in this world, as has been explained, when a person sleeps in his bed and souls have to wander the world—leaving the body[191]—not every single soul ascends, soaring to gaze upon the splendor of the Countenance of Days.[192] Rather, as one is habitually drawn, according to his deeds, so his soul ascends.

“If he is defiled, he sleeps, his soul departs, and all those impure spirits seize her. She clings to those lower rungs roaming the world, who divulge to her imminent events,[193] sometimes conveying deceptions, toying with her, as has been established.[194]

“If one is worthy, when he sleeps and his soul departs, she soars—penetrating these impure spirits, who all proclaim: ‘Make way, make way! This is not one of ours!’ Then she ascends among those holy ones,[195] who divulge to her a word of truth. As she descends, all those ravaging bands of truculent stingers[196] seek to grasp that word—divulging other words—and that word she absorbed amid those holy ones lies among the [130b] others like grain mingled with straw.[197] Who can attain more while still existing in this world?

“Similarly, when souls depart from the body in this world,[198] they seek to ascend, but they are confronted by many gatekeepers, bands of dazzling demons.[199] If they belong to their side,[200] they all seize those souls—delivering them into the hands of Dumah,[201] to enter Hell. Then they ascend[202] and are seized again; they carry each one off,

proclaiming: ‘These have transgressed the command of their Lord!’ So they sweep throughout the world, eventually returning them to Hell, and so it continues till the end of twelve months. After twelve months they subside into their appropriate site.[203] Worthy souls ascend on high, as has been said, attaining their sites.

“Come and see: Happy are the righteous, for whom abundant goodness is treasured away in that world![204] The inmost realm of all is reserved for those who know the mystery of their Lord, discovering how to cleave to Him every day.[205] Of these is written: *No eye has seen, O God, but You, what You will do for one who awaits You* (Isaiah 64:3).”[206] What does this mean: *for one who awaits You*? As is said: *He awaited Job with words* (Job 32:4). These are those who squeeze a word of wisdom, scrutinize it patiently to discover the lucidity of the word, to perceive their Lord. These are those in whom their Lord glories every day[207] among supernal holy ones.[208] These pass through all supernal gates with no one hindering them. Happy is their share in this world and in the world that is coming!

“Come and see: Abraham entered to know and cleave to his Lord fittingly after first performing deeds,[209] so he attained those supernal days[210] and was blessed from the site from which all blessings flow,[211] as is written: *YHVH blessed Abraham with everything* (Genesis 24:1).[212] What does *with everything* mean? Site of the river whose waters never cease.”[213]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “Come and see: Abraham did not want to intermingle with women of the world[214] or cleave to other nations, since women of other nations defile men who cleave to them. For once Abraham had discovered wisdom, he knew the root and source from which impure spirits issue to roam the world. Therefore he made his servant swear not to take a wife for his son from other nations.”[215]

Rabbi Yitsḥak opened, “*The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it* (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Come and see: When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He took his dust from the site of the Temple and fashioned his body from the four directions of the world, each infusing energy into him.[216] Then the spirit of life was poured upon him, as is said: *He blew into his nostrils the breath of life* (Genesis 2:7). Then he rose and realized he was of above and below; he grasped and knew supernal wisdom.

“Similarly, every human being in the world comprises of above and below. All those who know how to sanctify themselves in this world fittingly—when they engender a son, they draw down upon him holy spirit from the realm from which all holiness issues.[217] These are called ‘sons of the blessed Holy One,’ since the body is formed in holiness fittingly; so too he is given a spirit from a supernal holy realm, appropriately, as has been said.

“Come and see: When a human is destined to render an account of his deeds—as he is about to depart the world—that day is a day of reckoning, for body and soul render an account.[218] Afterward the soul separates from him and the body returns to the earth, each returning to the realm from which it was taken, as has been established.

“Until the time when the blessed Holy One intends to revive the dead, all is treasured away before Him. That very body,[219] that very soul the blessed Holy One will one day restore to the world, as before, renewing the face of the world, as is written: *Your dead will live, my corpses will arise!* (Isaiah 26:19). That very soul is treasured away before the blessed Holy One, returning to her realm according to her ways,[220] as is said: *and the spirit returns to God who gave it*.

“When one day the blessed Holy One revives the dead, He will shower dew from His head, and by that dew all will arise from the dust, as is said: *For Your dew is a dew of*

lights (Isaiah 26:19).[221] What is *a dew of lights*? *Lights*, literally! From those supernal lights,[222] through which He will pour forth life upon the world, for the Tree [131a] of Life will pour forth incessant life.[223]

"Now life ceases, since the evil serpent prevails and the moon is obscured; so its waters fail, as if it were possible, and life does not prevail in the world fittingly.[224] But at that time, the evil impulse—the evil serpent—will vanish from the world, eliminated by the blessed Holy One, as has been explained.[225] Once he is eliminated from the world, the moon will no longer be obscured, and bubbling springs of the gushing river will not cease. Then this verse will be fulfilled: *The light of the moon will be like the light of the sun,*[226] *and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of the seven days* (Isaiah 30:26)."[227]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, "If you say that all bodies of the world will arise, aroused from the dust, what will become of those bodies sown in a single soul?"[228]

Rabbi Yose replied, "Those bodies that have not been virtuous and have not flourished are considered as if they never existed. As they were a withered tree in this world, so too at that time.[229] The final body will arise, for once sown, it flourished and took root fittingly. Of this one is written: *He will be like a tree planted by water… its leaves will be luxuriant…* (Jeremiah 17:8),[230] for it generated fruit,[231] took root and flourished fittingly. Of that previous body is written: *He will be like a shrub in the desert, and will not see when good comes…* (ibid., 6). *When good comes*—revival of the dead, when that light destined to illumine the righteous will shine, treasured away before Him since the day the world was created, as is written: *God saw that the light was good* (Genesis 1:4).[232] Then the blessed Holy One will revive the dead, and it is written: *For you who revere My name, the sun of victory will rise, with healing in its wings* (Malachi 3:20).[233] Then good will prevail in the world, and the one called Evil will be eliminated from the

world, as we have said. Then those previous bodies will be as though they had never been."

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "The blessed Holy One will one day pour upon those bodies other spirits.[234] If they prove worthy of them,[235] they will arise in the world fittingly. If not, they will become ashen cinders under the feet of the righteous,[236] as is written: *Many of those who sleep in the dust of earth will awake*… (Daniel 12:2).[237] All arise and present themselves before the blessed Holy One, all enumerated, as is said: *The one who brings forth their array by number*… (Isaiah 40:26).[238]

"Come and see, as has been said: All the dead of the land of Israel will arise first,[239] for the blessed Holy One will be aroused over them, zealous for them, as is written: *Your dead will live!*—those in the land of Israel; *my corpses will arise!* (Isaiah 26:19)—those in other lands,[240] of whom 'living' is not written, but rather 'rising,' for the spirit of life alights only upon the Holy Land. So of them is written: *will live*, while those outside will have their bodies recreated and will arise as body without spirit, later rolling underground until they reach the land of Israel.[241] There they will receive a soul, not in foreign territory,[242] so that they may endure in the world fittingly."

Rabbi El'azar and Rabbi Yeisa were sitting one night, engaged in Torah.

Rabbi El'azar said, "Come and see: When one day the blessed Holy One revives the dead, all those souls presenting themselves before Him will stand in distinct images, the exact same image they bore in this world.[243] The blessed Holy One will bring them down and call them by name, as is said: *He will call them each by name* (Isaiah 40:26). Every soul will enter her site[244] and abide enduringly, fittingly in the world. Then the world will be perfect. Of that time is written: *He will remove the disgrace of His people* (ibid. 25:8). What is *the disgrace of His*

people? The evil impulse, who besmirches creatures' faces and overpowers them."

Rabbi Yeisa said, "We see that as long as a human being abides in this spirit, he does not impart impurity, but as soon as his soul departs, he does."[245]

He replied, "Certainly! As already explained, when that evil impulse seizes a person's spirit,[246] he defiles him and the body is left impure. Other nations while still alive are impure, since their souls derive from the impure side,[247] so once that impurity is poured out, the body is left without any impurity at all.[248] Therefore [131b] whoever cleaves to a woman of the other nations is defiled,[249] and the son born to him receives an impure spirit.

"Now, you might say 'Look! On his father's side he descends from Israel.[250] Why should he receive an impure spirit?' Come and see: He became defiled previously, the moment he cleaved to that woman who is impure.[251] Since he was already defiled and became impure and that woman is impure, all the more so the son who is born will receive an impure spirit. Furthermore he has violated Torah, as is written: *Do not bow down to another god! For YHVH: His name is Jealous*...(Exodus 34:14),[252] since He is jealous for this covenant."[253]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Come and see, as has been said: Once Abraham perceived wisdom, he sought to separate from all other nations, not to cleave to them.[254] So it is written: *I will have you swear by YHVH, God of heaven and God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanite* (Genesis 24:3).[255] *From the daughters of the Canaanite*, precisely![256] A mystery, corresponding to what is said: *He has married the daughter of a foreign god* (Malachi 2:11).[257]

"Among whom I dwell (Genesis, ibid.).[258] *I*, precisely![259] Here is written: *I*, and there is written: *It is I who made the earth* (Isaiah 45:12). All this so as not to be defiled by them.

“Come and see: Whoever inserts this holy covenant[260] into that woman[261] inflicts defilement upon himself and upon another site.[262] Of this is written: *At three things the earth trembles:… and at a slave-girl supplanting her mistress* (Proverbs 30:21–23).[263]

“Although he made him swear by this covenant,[264] Abraham did not trust him until he had prayed before the blessed Holy One, saying, *YHVH, God of heaven… He will send His angel* (Genesis, ibid., 7)[265]—indeed, Angel of Covenant,[266] so this covenant be preserved, not defiled among those nations.

“*Just don’t take my son back there!* (ibid., 8). Why? Because Abraham knew that among all of them[267] there was no one who perceived the blessed Holy One, only he alone. He did not want Isaac dwelling among them, but rather with him—so that Isaac would constantly learn from him the ways of the blessed Holy One, straying neither right nor left. That is why Abraham did not want Isaac dwelling there.”

Rabbi Yeisa said, “Certainly Abraham’s merit lighted upon that servant—for on the same day he set out, he reached the fountain, as is written: *I came today to the spring* (ibid. 24:42), as they have established.”[268]

Rabbi El’azar opened, saying, “*Uncover my eyes, so I can see wonders out of your Torah!* (Psalms 119:18). How stupid people are, ignorant and unmindful of engaging in Torah! For Torah constitutes all life, freedom, and goodness—in this world and in the world that is coming. Freedom, both in this world and in the world that is coming. Life in this world, for they attain days in this world; and length of days in the world that is coming[269]—for that is perfect life, a life of bliss with no trace of sadness, life that is really life! Freedom in this world—total freedom—for whoever engages in Torah cannot be dominated by all the nations of the world.

“Now, you might ask ‘What about those who suffer persecution?’[270] This was decreed from above, as with Rabbi Akiva and his companions; so it arose in thought.[271]

“Freedom from the Angel of Death, who is powerless against him. Certainly so! For if Adam had cleaved to the Tree of Life—namely, Torah[272]—he would not have inflicted death upon himself and upon the entire world. So when the blessed Holy One gave Torah to Israel, what is written? חרות (*Ḥarut*), *Engraved, upon the tablets* (Exodus 32:16), as they have established.[273] If only they had not sinned[274]—forsaking the Tree of Life—they would not have reinflicted death upon the world. The blessed Holy One declared, ‘*I thought you were gods, children of the Most High, all of you*, but now that you have corrupted yourselves, *you will surely die like Adam* (Psalms 82:6–7).’[275] So whoever engages in Torah cannot be overpowered by that evil serpent who darkens the world.”

Rabbi Yeisa said, “Then why should he die?”[276]

He replied, “He certainly does die; but as we have said, he is not overpowered by him, killed by him, defiled by him.[277] He certainly does not die [132a]—but rather cleaves to *Shekhinah* and proceeds to eternal life. Such a one is called *living*, as has been established, for it is written: *Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of a living man…* (2 Samuel 23:20).[278] So whoever engages in Torah attains total freedom: freedom in this world from being dominated by other nations, freedom in the world that is coming, for he will not be prosecuted in that world at all.[279]

“Come and see: Torah contains countless concealed, supernal secrets, so it is written: *She is more precious than rubies* (Proverbs 3:15). How many hidden treasures she contains! When David contemplated the spirit of wisdom and realized how many wonders emerge from Torah, he opened, saying, *Uncover my eyes, so I can see wonders out of your Torah!*

“Come and see: *He had not even finished speaking, when here, Rebekah came out* (Genesis 24:15).[280] *Came out*—the verse should read: *came*.[281] Why *came out*? Because the blessed Holy One took her out from all inhabitants of the town—all of whom were wicked—and she *came out*, out of the ordinary.

“*She went down* הָעַיְנָה (*ha-aynah*), *to the spring* (ibid., 16), spelled with a ה (*he*)[282]—a mystery, for Miriam’s well manifested, so it is written: הָעַיְנָה (*ha-aynah*), with a ה (*he*), and the water rose toward her.[283]

“Alternatively, *when here, Rebekah came out*, as is written: *coming out to draw water* (ibid., 13).[284] Why *coming out* and not *going* or *coming*?[285] Because they had been concealed all day long[286] and were just then coming out to draw water; so he took it as a sign.[287]

“Come and see: When the servant reached Haran and found Rebekah *toward evening* (ibid., 11), it was the time of afternoon prayer. The very moment Isaac reached afternoon prayer,[288] the servant reached Rebekah; and the moment Isaac reached afternoon prayer once again, Rebekah reached him[289]—so that each would appear in its essential site, fittingly.[290] All arrived in the mystery of wisdom; so that servant came to the well corresponding to the written mystery: *a spring of gardens, a well of living waters* (Song of Songs 4:15),[291] as we have established—all a mystery.”

Rabbi Shim’on was coming to Tiberias,[292] accompanied by Rabbi Abba. Rabbi Shim’on said to Rabbi Abba, “Let us go on, for I see that a certain man will soon reach us, with new words in his mouth, words of Torah!”

Rabbi Abba said, “I already know that wherever you go, the blessed Holy One sends winged flying angels to delight you.”

While they were walking, Rabbi Shim’on raised his eyes and saw a man running along. Rabbi Shim’on and Rabbi

Abba sat down. When he reached them, Rabbi Shim'on asked him, "Who are you?"

He replied, "I am a Jew. I am coming from Cappadocia[293] and am going to the amphitheater[294] of the son of Yoḥai, for the companions have voted on certain matters and have sent me to him."[295]

He said to him, "Speak, my son!"

He asked him, "Are you the son of Yoḥai?"

He replied, "I am the son of Yoḥai."

He said, "We have established that while praying, a person should let nothing interpose between himself and the wall, as is written: *Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall*... (Isaiah 38:2).[296] Further, it is forbidden to pass within four cubits of one who is praying,[297] and they have established these four cubits in every direction except in front of him.[298] They have also established that one should not pray behind his teacher...[299] They have voted on all these matters."

He opened, saying,[300] "שמעה (*Shim'ah*), *Hear, my prayer, O YHVH; give ear to my cry; do not keep silent at my tears!* (Psalms 39:13). Why שמעה (*shim'ah*) and not שמע (*shema*)?[301] In one place is written: *Shema, Hear, O YHVH, and have mercy on me!*... (Psalms 30:11), and in another place: *shim'ah, hear* —but everywhere: sometimes *shema*, for the male; sometimes *shim'ah*, for the female.[302] *Shim'ah*, as is said: *Shim'ah, Hear, O YHVH, what is just!*... (ibid. 17:1);[303] *shema*, as is said: *Shema, Hear, O YHVH, and have mercy on me!...; Shema, Hear, O my son!* (Proverbs 1:8); *Be silent ushma, and hear!* (Deuteronomy 27:9).[304] Here, *Shim'ah, Hear, my prayer, O YHVH*, because this rung receives all prayers of the world, weaving them into a wreath, which it places on the head of צדיק (*Tsaddiq*), Righteous One—Vitality of the Worlds—as we have learned, for it is written: *Blessings upon the head of tsaddiq, righteous one* (Proverbs 10:6).[305] So, *Shim'ah, Hear, my prayer, O YHVH!*

"*Shim'ah, Hear, my prayer, O YHVH!*—whispered prayer; *give ear to my cry!*—prayer cried out in anguish, as is said: *Their cry rose up to God* (Exodus 2:23).[306] What is a cry? Raising one's voice, raising one's eyes,[307] as is said: *crying to the mountain* (Isaiah 22:5). Such prayer [132b] smashes gates, beating on them so prayer may enter.

"*At my tears!*[308]—entering the presence of the King. No gate can withstand them; tears never return unfulfilled.[309]

"Look, here are three rungs: prayer, cry, tears.[310] Corresponding to these, three others: *For I am a stranger with You* (Psalms 39, ibid); then, *a sojourner;* then, *like all my fathers*, essence of the world.[311]

"Come and see: Human prayer is recited standing.[312] For there are two prayers: one sitting, one standing,[313] and they are one—corresponding to two rungs: תפלה (*tefillah*), phylactery, of the hand and *tefillah* of the head,[314] corresponding to day and night[315]—and all is one. Here too, sitting prayer corresponds to *tefillah* of the hand, adorning Her as one adorns a bride, bedecking Her to enter the canopy.[316] Similarly, we adorn Her in the mystery of Her chariots and camps: 'Creator of ministering angels, who… and the Ophanim and holy beings…'[317] So this prayer is recited sitting.

"Once She enters—approaching the Supernal King[318]—and He comes forward to receive Her, we rise in the presence of the Supernal King,[319] for then male unites with female. So one should not pause between 'redemption' and prayer.[320]

"Since one is standing in the presence of the Supernal King, he takes four cubits for his prayer,[321] as established in measuring the court, gauging the eyebrow of the Creator of all.[322] Whatever proceeds on the side of the male must be recited while standing erect.[323] Similarly, when one bows, he bows at 'Blessed'; and when one stands erect, he does so at the Name[324]—demonstrating the superiority of male over female.[325]

“Come and see, as has been established: One should not pray behind his teacher.[326] This has been explained in light of what is written: את יהוה (*Et YHVH*) *your God you shall hold in awe* (Deuteronomy 6:13)—*et* encompassing the obligation to be in awe of one’s teacher as one is of *Shekhinah*.[327] Since a student is in awe of his teacher, during prayer he should not face that object of awe, but rather awe of the blessed Holy One alone—no other awe.

“Come and see: Isaac certainly instituted afternoon prayer. Just as Abraham instituted morning prayer—corresponding to the rung to which he cleaved—so Isaac instituted afternoon prayer, corresponding to the rung to which he cleaved.[328] So afternoon prayer is recited beginning when the sun inclines, descending by degrees toward the West; for until the sun inclines westward is called ‘day’—from dawn until then—as is written: *God’s* חסד (*ḥesed*), *grace, endures all day* (Psalms 52:3).

“Now, if you say ‘until dark,’[329] come and hear what is written: *Woe to us, for the day is fading, shadows of evening spread!* (Jeremiah 6:4).[330] *The day is fading* from receiving morning prayer, as is written: *God’s grace endures all day*, for then the sun is in the East. As soon as the sun inclines, descending westward, the time of afternoon prayer arrives. Already *the day is fading shadows of evening* approach, and severe Judgment arouses toward the world. *The day is fading*—rung of *Ḥesed; shadows of evening spread*—rung of severe Judgment.[331] Then the Sanctuary was destroyed and the Temple was burned.[332] So we have learned that one should be conscientious about afternoon prayer, when severe Judgment looms over the world.[333]

“Jacob instituted evening prayer, arraying Her, nourishing Her with all She needs.[334] Indeed, ו (*vav*) adorned ה (*he*); *he* was nourished by *vav*,[335] for She has no light of Her own at all.[336] So evening prayer is optional,[337] being already included in daytime prayer in order to shine,[338] while now is not the time.[339] This we have

established, for the light of day is not revealed, illumining Her, and She reigns in darkness until the moment of midnight, when the blessed Holy One delights with the righteous in the Garden of Eden. That is the time one should delight in Torah, as has been said.[340]

"Come and see: David came and mentioned these three periods of prayer, as is written: *Evening, morning, and noon*… (Psalms 55:18).[341] Look: three, yet he prayed only two of them, as is written: *I meditate and moan* (ibid.)—no more, one for morning prayer, one for afternoon prayer. In the morning, time of grace, *I meditate* suffices; in the afternoon, time of severe Judgment, moaning is required. Later, at the moment of midnight, he would rise in song and praise [133a] fittingly, as is written: *At night His song is with me* (ibid. 42:9), as already said."[342]

Rabbi Shim'on rose and they walked on, that man accompanying him to Tiberias. As they were walking, Rabbi Shim'on said, "Come and see: Our masters, members of the Great Assembly,[343] instituted the prayers corresponding to the continual daily offerings,[344] for we find two, as is written: *One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the second lamb you shall offer at twilight* (Numbers 28:4). They are offered at times of day coinciding with the times of prayer."[345]

That man said, "But originally the patriarchs instituted these prayers.[346] The ones instituted by Abraham and Isaac[347] are essential, while the one instituted by Jacob[348] —Glory of the Patriarchs[349]—why is it optional and not essential like these?"

Rabbi Shim'on replied, "This has already been explained,[350] but come and see: These two times of prayer are intended solely to unite Jacob with his share.[351] Once they are joined with one another, we need no more, for once Woman is placed between two arms and joined with Body,[352] nothing more is needed. Therefore we must arouse two arms, so that She may be placed between them. Once

She is between them, words of Body and Woman are whispered, not recited.[353]

"So we have learned that Jacob performs on high.[354] What is 'on high'? As is said: *You are on high* (Psalms 92:9).[355] All is a mystery for fathomers."[356]

Rabbi Abba and the Jew came and kissed his hands.[357] Rabbi Abba said, "Until this day I never comprehended this matter, only now! Happy is my share that I have been privileged to hear it!"

Isaac brought her to the tent, Sarah his mother (Genesis 24:67).[358]

Rabbi Yose said, "This verse is difficult: האהלה (*ha-ohelah*), *to the tent, Sarah his mother*. It should read: לאהל (*le-ohel*), *to the tent of, Sarah his mother*. Why האהלה (*ha-ohelah*)?[359] Because *Shekhinah* returned there.[360] As long as Sarah existed, *Shekhinah* never departed from her. A lamp would burn from one Sabbath eve to the next, illlumining all the days of the week. After she died, that lamp died out; as soon as Rebekah appeared, *Shekhinah* reappeared and the lamp rekindled. *Sarah his mother*—resembling Sarah in all she did."[361]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "Just as Isaac's image was identical with Abraham's—so that whoever saw Isaac said, 'That's Abraham! Undoubtedly, *Abraham engendered Isaac!*'[362]—similarly, Rebekah's image was precisely Sarah's; so, *Sarah his mother*, literally!"[363]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Entirely so! But come and see: This is a mystery, for even though Sarah died, her image never departed from the house,[364] becoming invisible from the day of her death until Rebekah arrived. As soon as Rebekah entered, Sarah's image became visible, as is written: *Isaac brought her to the tent;* immediately, *Sarah his mother* appeared. No one saw her except Isaac when he entered, so *Isaac was comforted after his mother*—after his mother

manifested, which is why the verse does not read *after his mother's death*."[365]

Rabbi Shim'on said, "Why is it written specifically of Isaac, *He took Rebekah as his wife, and he loved her* (ibid.)? Since it says: *as his wife*, don't we know that he loved her? All men love their wives! What is so special about Isaac that of him is written *and he loved her*? But precisely! Arousal of love of male toward female quickens only on the left,[366] as is written: *His left hand beneath my head* (Song of Songs 2:6).[367] Darkness and night are as one;[368] left always arouses love toward female, grasping her. So even though Abraham loved Sarah, of him is not written *and he loved her*, rather of Isaac.[369]

"Now, you might say *Jacob loved Rachel* (Genesis 29:18)![370] But this was expressed by the aspect of Isaac within him.[371]

"Come and see: When Abraham saw Rebekah, he embraced her—nothing more; but Isaac, being her husband, grasped her—laying his arm under her head, as is written: *His left hand beneath my head, his right embracing me*.[372] Later, Jacob came and performed in bed, engendering twelve tribes, all fittingly.[373]

"Come and see: All the patriarchs traced one mystery, [133b] each and every one of them performing with four women.[374] Abraham with four: Sarah, Hagar, and two concubines, as is written: *to the sons of Abraham's concubines* (ibid. 25:6)—*concubines*, two, totaling four.[375] Isaac with mystery of four from the aspect of Rebekah, as is written: *He took Rebekah*—one; *as his wife*—two; *and he loved her*—three; *so Isaac was comforted after his mother*—totaling four.[376] Correspondingly, Jacob had four women,[377] all in one mystery."

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "Abraham and Isaac each performed with one woman in the mystery of holiness: Abraham with Sarah, Isaac with Rebekah.[378] Corresponding to both of them, Jacob had four women in two portions."[379]

Rabbi Shim'on said, "Words have ascended to their site![380] For all was enacted in holy mystery, all in one mystery.

"*Once again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah* (ibid., 1). Keturah is identical with Hagar.[381] For we have learned that after Hagar separated from Abraham and strayed after her father's filthy idols,[382] she was eventually adorned ואתקטירת (*ve-itqetirat*), and perfumed, with worthy deeds,[383] so her name was changed. From here we learn that a change of name purges sins;[384] so her name was changed and she was called קטורה (*Qeturah*), Perfumed, with worthy deeds, and Abraham took her as a wife.

"*Once again Abraham*.[385] What does *once again* mean? If you say in addition to Sarah, no! Rather, during Sarah's lifetime he coupled with her once,[386] banishing her afterward on account of Ishmael.[387] Later, *once again* as before, another time in addition to taking her at first.[388] Just as she had changed her deeds, so her name changed.

"Come and see what Rabbi El'azar said: '*Isaac brought her to the tent—Sarah his mother,*[389] for the image of Sarah manifested.[390] Once his mother appeared, Isaac was comforted, gazing at her image every day. Although Abraham re-married, not in that house, and he never brought this woman inside, so that a slave-girl would not supplant her mistress;[391] no woman but Rebekah ever appeared in Sarah's tent. And even though Abraham knew that Sarah's image appeared there, he left that tent to Isaac, to gaze upon his mother's image every day—Isaac, not Abraham, as is written: *Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac* (ibid., 5)—*all that he had*, precisely: the image of Sarah in that dwelling!'

"Alternatively, *Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac*—mystery of supernal faith, so that Isaac would cleave fittingly to his destined rung.[392]

“Come and see: Here fire was completed by water.[393] Indeed, fire absorbed water, as indicated by: *Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac*—water embraced by fire. At first, fire embraced by water. When? The moment he bound Isaac, executing judgment upon him; then fire was embraced by water.[394] Now water blended with fire, so that all would become a mystery of supernal faith.

“*To the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts* (ibid., 6).[395] What are *gifts*? Aspects of low rungs, names of aspects of impure spirit,[396] to complete rungs so that Isaac would ascend on high, all fittingly in supernal faith.[397]

“*The sons of his concubines*—sons of Keturah, concubine at first and concubine now.”[398]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “*Concubines*, literally![399]

“*He sent them away from his son Isaac* (ibid.)—so as not to rule along with Isaac.

“*While he was still alive*—while Abraham was still alive and enduring in the world, so that they would not antagonize him later,[400] so that Isaac would be empowered on the side of supernal, severe Judgment,[401] prevailing over them all, all of them overwhelmed.

“*Eastward, to the land of the East*—domain of those aspects of impure witchcraft.[402]

“Come and see what is written: *Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the children of the East* (1 Kings 5:10)—those descended from the sons of Abraham’s concubines. We have already established that in the mountains of the East dwell those who teach witchcraft to human beings.[403] From that land of the East issued Laban, Beor, Balaam, his sons,[404] and all sorcerers, as has been established.”

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah opened, “*Who gave up Jacob for spoil* [134a]…? (Isaiah 42:24).[405]

“Come and see: Ever since the day the Temple was destroyed, blessings are absent from the world,[406] withheld

—withheld, as it were, above and below[407]—so all those other, lower rungs are empowered and come to dominate Israel,[408] who bring this about through their sins.

"Words of this verse are unsettled, for it is written: *Who gave up Jacob for spoil?* Having said this, why *against whom we have sinned*? The verse should read: *against whom they have sinned*![409] And if *we have sinned*, the verse should continue: *we would not*. Why *they would not*, having just said: *we have sinned*?

"But actually when the Sanctuary was destroyed, the Temple burned, and the people exiled, *Shekhinah* sought to be uprooted from Her site—to accompany them in exile.[410] She said, 'First I will go see My house, My temple, and visit the site I used to inhabit and the stations of the priests and Levites who served in My house.'"

Rabbi El'azar said, "At that moment Assembly of Israel[411] looked up and saw that Her Husband[412] had withdrawn from Her far, far above; She descended below and entered Her house, gazing at all those places. A voice was heard far, far above; a voice was heard below, as is written: *A voice is heard on a height—wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children* (Jeremiah 31:15),[413] as has been established.

"When She went into exile, She gazed at Her people and saw them being oppressed, trampled under the feet of other nations. Then She said, *Who gave up Jacob for spoil?*…[414] They replied, *Was it not YHVH, against whom we have sinned?* She responded, *In whose ways they would not walk and whose Torah they would not obey*.

"When one day the blessed Holy One attends to His people, and Assembly of Israel returns from exile, She will first go to Her house, since the Holy Temple will be built first. The blessed Holy One will say to Her, 'Rise from the dust!' She will respond, 'Where should I go? My house is destroyed, My temple burned!' So first the blessed Holy One will build the Sanctuary, restore the Temple, rebuild

the city fittingly; then He will raise Her from the dust, as is written: *YHVH builds Jerusalem*, first; then, *He gathers the banished of Israel* (Psalms 147:2).[415] He will tell Her, *Shake off your dust, arise, sit enthroned, O Jerusalem!* (Isaiah 52:2). Then *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds* (Psalms, ibid., 3)—revival of the dead. And it is written: *I will put My spirit within you* (Ezekiel 36:27).”

פרשת תולדות

Parashat Toledot

"GENERATIONS" (GENESIS 25:19–28:9)

These are the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham. Abraham engendered Isaac (Genesis 25:19).

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, "*Who can express the mighty acts of YHVH or declare all His praise?* (Psalms 106:2). Come and see: When the blessed Holy One desired—when it arose in His will—to create the world, He gazed into Torah and created it. For every act of creation throughout the world, the blessed Holy One gazed into Torah and created, as is written: *I was with Him as* אמון (*amon*), *a nursling*...(Proverbs 8:30). [134b] Do not read אמון (*amon*), *nursling*, but rather אומן (*umman*), *artisan.*[1]

"As He was about to create Adam, Torah exclaimed: 'If a human being is created and then proceeds to sin, and You punish him—why should the work of Your hands be in vain, since he will be unable to endure Your judgment?'[2]

"He replied, 'I have already prepared *teshuvah*, returning, before creating the world.'[3]

"Once He had made the world and created Adam, the blessed Holy One exclaimed, 'O world, world! You and your laws are based solely upon Torah. That is why I created the human being in you, so that he might engage in her, strive for her. If not, I will turn you back into chaos and void.'[4]

"Everything exists for the sake of humanity, as is written: *I made the earth and created humankind upon it* (Isaiah 45:12). Torah stands calling out to human beings to engage in her, strive for her, but no one bends an ear.[5]

“Come and see: Whoever engages in Torah sustains the world, maintaining every work of creation perfectly, fittingly. Every single smooth member[6] in the human body corresponds to a creature in the world. For just as a human being is composed of members upon members, all standing rung upon rung, arrayed one upon another, yet all one body, so too the world: all those creatures are members upon members, standing one upon another, which when all arrayed actually form one body.[7]

“All these resemble Torah, for Torah is entirely members, joints, sections[8]—standing one upon another, all arrayed, becoming one body.[9] When David saw this handiwork, he opened and said, *O YHVH, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures* (Psalms 104:24).

“Within Torah abide all supernal, sealed mysteries, ungraspable. Within Torah abide all supernal matters, revealed and unrevealed. Within Torah abide all things above and below. All things of this world, all things of the world that is coming abide within Torah—yet no [135a] one perceives or knows them, so it is written: *Who can express the mighty acts of YHVH or declare all His praise?*

“Come and see: Solomon came and sought to comprehend the words of Torah—the fine points of Torah—but he was unable and exclaimed, *I said, ‘I will be wise,’ but it is beyond me* (Ecclesiastes 7:23).[10] David said, *Uncover my eyes, so I can see wonders out of your Torah!* (Psalms 119:18).

“Come and see! Of Solomon is written: *He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered one thousand and five* (1 Kings 5:12). They have already established that every single proverb he spoke implied *one thousand and five* meanings.[11] If this is so with the words of Solomon—who was flesh and blood—how much more so with words of Torah, spoken by the blessed Holy One! Every single word contains countless parables, songs, praises, supernal

secrets, countless varieties of wisdom. So, *Who can express the mighty acts of YHVH?*

"Come and see what is written above: *These are the generations of Ishmael* (Genesis 25:12), namely, twelve princes. Afterward Scripture states: *These are the generations of Isaac*. You might imagine that since Ishmael engendered twelve princes whereas Isaac engendered two sons, this one ascended and that one did not. So it is written: *Who can express* גבורות (*gevurot*), *the mighty acts, of YHVH?*—Isaac, who engendered Jacob and Esau.[12] Isaac generated Jacob, who singly surpassed them all, engendering twelve tribes, sustaining above and below. But Isaac, above in supernal holiness; Esau, below. So it is written: *Who can express the mighty acts of YHVH?*

"*Or declare all His praise?*—Jacob. When the sun cleaves to the moon, countless stars radiate from them."[13]

These are the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham.

Rabbi Yose said, "Why is *son of Abraham* mentioned only now and not previously? Because although it is written *God blessed Isaac his son* (Genesis 25:11), now that Abraham had died, his image remained stamped in Isaac—so whoever saw Isaac would say 'That's really Abraham!' and would attest: *Abraham engendered Isaac* (ibid., 19)."[14]

One night Rabbi Yitsḥak rose [135b] to engage in Torah. At the same moment, Rabbi Yehudah rose in his Caesarean castle.[15] He said, "I will go to Rabbi Yitsḥak's house and engage in Torah, so we can join as one." His young son Ḥizkiyah accompanied him.

As he approached his door, he heard Rabbi Yitsḥak saying, "*After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac dwelled by the well Lahai Roi* (Genesis 25:11). The beginning of this verse is inconsistent with its end, and its end with its beginning! Why, in this case, did the blessed Holy One have to bless Isaac?[16] Because

Abraham didn't bless him. Why? So that Esau would not be blessed.[17] Consequently he consigned those blessings to the blessed Holy One, as they have established.[18]

"*Isaac dwelled by the well Lahai Roi*. What does לחי רואי (*la-ḥai ro'i*) mean? That he joined *Shekhinah*. A well upon which appeared the Angel of Covenant, as the verse is translated.[19] Therefore He blessed him."

Meanwhile Rabbi Yehudah knocked on the door and entered, and they joined together.

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "Now coupling of *Shekhinah* consorts with us!"[20]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "What you said about *the well Lahai Roi* is well spoken, but that is implied by its very words."

He opened, saying, "A *spring of gardens, a well of living waters, flows from Lebanon* (Song of Songs 4:15). This has already been discussed,[21] but they have established: *A spring of gardens*—Abraham; *a well of living waters*—Isaac; *flows*—Jacob.[22] A *well of living waters*—Isaac, as is written: *Isaac dwelled by the well Lahai Roi*, precisely! *The well*—*Shekhinah*[23] לחי (*la-ḥai*), *of the Living One*—חי (*Ḥei*), Life of, the Worlds: Righteous One, Vitality of the Worlds;[24] they are not to be separated.[25] He lives in two worlds: above, upper world; and with the lower world, enduring, glowing through Him.[26]

"Come and see: The moon is illumined only when seeing the sun; upon seeing Him, She shines.[27] So, this *well* לחי רואי (*la-ḥai ro'i*), *sees the Living One*, precisely, and is then illumined, sustained by living waters. *La-ḥai ro'i, seeing the Living One*—to be filled and illumined by this Living One.

"Come and see: [136a] *Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of a living man* (2 Samuel 23:20), for he was righteous—illumining his generation as Living One above illumines the world.[28] This *well* constantly gazes upon *the Living One* to be illumined, as we have said.

“*Isaac dwelled by* באר (*be’er*), *the well, Lahai Roi*, corresponding to what is written: בקחתו את רבקה (*be-qaḥto et Rivqah*), *when he took Rebekah* (Genesis 25:20),[29] dwelling with her, uniting with her, darkness with night,[30] as is written: *His left hand beneath my head* (Song of Songs 2:6).[31]

“Come and see: After Abraham died, Isaac was in Kiriath Arba.[32] So what is the meaning of *Isaac dwelled by the well Lahai Roi?*. That he embraced and coupled with that well to arouse love, as we have said.”

Rabbi Yitsḥak opened, saying, “*The sun shines forth*[33] *and the sun sets, and pants toward where he rises* (Ecclesiastes 1:5).

“*The sun shines forth*—sun illumining moon,[34] for when appearing with Her, He glows, illumined, shining forth from the supernal site abiding above Him, whence He shines constantly.[35]

“ובא השמש (*U-va ha-shemesh*), *And the sun sets*—coupling with the moon.[36]

“*Moving toward the south* (ibid., 6)[37]—the right, depositing its potency there.[38] Since its potency lies there, all the power of the body is on the right, dependent on the right.

“Then *circling toward the north* (ibid.)[39]—illumining this side, illumining that side.

“*Round and round whirls the wind*. At first is written *sun*, and now *wind*, but all is one—one mystery.[40] All this, so that the moon is illumined by Him and the two of them unite.

“Come and see: When Abraham came to the world, he embraced the moon, bringing Her near. When Isaac arrived he held Her tight, fittingly, drawing Her in love—as has been said—for it is written: *His left hand beneath my head*.[41] When Jacob came, sun united with moon, illumined.

Jacob became complete on all sides; the moon was illumined and arrayed with twelve tribes."[42]

Rabbi Yehudah opened, saying, "*Come, bless YHVH, all you servants of YHVH, who stand by night in the house of YHVH!* (Psalms 134:1). This verse has been established,[43] but come and see: *Come, bless YHVH!* Who is worthy of blessing the blessed Holy One? *All you servants of YHVH*, for although every [136b] single Israelite in the world is worthy of blessing the blessed Holy One, which blessing yields blessing above and below? The one offered by *servants of YHVH*, not by all of them. Whose blessing is true blessing? *Those who stand by night in the house of YHVH*—those who rise at midnight, awakening to recite Torah. These *stand by night in the house of YHVH*, for then the blessed Holy One comes to delight with the righteous in the Garden of Eden.[44] Since we are standing here to be aroused by Torah, let us discuss Isaac, with whom we are engaged."

Rabbi Yitsḥak[45] opened, saying, "*Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah*… (Genesis 25:20).[46] *Forty years old*—Why does Scripture specify that he was *forty years old* when he married Rebekah?[47] Because indeed, Isaac encompassed North and South, fire and water.[48] So *Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah*, who resembled a rainbow: green, white, red.[49] She was three years old when he embraced her[50]—when he embraced Rebekah; and when he engendered, he engendered at sixty, generating fittingly, so that Jacob would issue perfectly from a sixty-year-old.[51] All of them were later linked with Jacob, and he became a consummate man.[52]

"*Daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram, sister of Laban the Aramean* (ibid.). Who cares about all this? It has already been stated: *Bethuel fathered Rebekah* (ibid. 22:23). Now, *daughter of Bethuel the Aramean;* then, *from Paddan Aram;* then, *sister of Laban the Aramean?* But they have established that although she was among the

wicked, she did not act like them. For she was *daughter of Bethuel, from Paddan Aram*, and *sister of Laban*, all of whom were perniciously evil; yet she ascended by worthy deeds and did not imitate them.[53]

"Now one should contemplate: If Rebekah had been twenty years old or more, or even thirteen, then it would have been commendable if she had not acted like them; but since she was only three, what is so great about it?"

Rabbi Yehudah replied, "She was three years old, yet she performed all that service for the servant."[54]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "Even though she did all that, we do not know if her actions were worthy or not.[55] [137a] But come and see what is written: *Like a rose among thorns, so is my beloved among the maidens* (Song of Songs *2:2*).[56] *Like a rose*—Assembly of Israel, who lies among Her hosts like a rose among thorns.[57]

"Mystery of the word: Isaac issues from the side of Abraham, supernal *Ḥesed*, who acts in love toward all creatures, though he is severe Judgment.[58] Rebekah issues from the side of severe Judgment, but she withdrew from among them and joined Isaac; for although she issues from the side of severe Judgment, she is mild Judgment, a thread of grace dangling from her.[59] Isaac, severe Judgment; she, mild, *like a rose among thorns*. If she had not been mild, the world could not have endured the severe Judgment of Isaac.

"Similarly, the blessed Holy One matches couples in the world:[60] one stern, one tender—so that all will be arranged harmoniously, so that the world will be firm and sweet."[61]

Rabbi Yehudah opened after him, saying, "ויעתר יצחק (*Va-ye'tar Yitsḥaq*), *Isaac entreated, YHVH on behalf of his wife* (Genesis 25:21).[62] What does ויעתר (*va-ye'tar*) mean? He offered Him an offering and prayed over it.[63] What did he offer? An ascent-offering, as is written: ויעתר לו יי (*va-ye'ater lo YHVH*), *and YHVH let Himself be entreated* (ibid.). Here is written: *va-ye'ater lo YHVH*,

and there is written: ויעתר אלהים (*va-ye'ater Elohim*), *and God let Himself be entreated, for the land* (2 Samuel 24:25).[64] Just as there an offering, so here an offering.[65] It is written: *Isaac entreated*, and then: *YHVH let Himself be entreated*, for fire issued from above, corresponding to fire below.[66]

"Alternatively, *Isaac entreated*, offering his prayer, delving above, penetrating to the streaming constellation in charge of children, for children depend on that site,[67] and then ויעתר לו יי (*va-ye'ater lo YHVH*), *YHVH let Himself be entreated*. Do not read ויעתר (*va-ye'ater*), *let Himself be entreated*, but rather ויחתר (*va-yeḥtor*), *He penetrated*. The blessed Holy One dug an opening for him, accepting him; so *his wife Rebekah conceived* (Genesis, ibid.).[68]

"Come and see: For twenty years Isaac waited with his wife,[69] but she did not give birth until he offered his prayer, since the blessed Holy One delights in prayers of the righteous when they plead before Him for what they need.[70] Why? So that through prayers of the righteous, holy anointing oil will increase and spread for the one [137b] in need.[71]

"Come and see: Abraham did not pray to the blessed Holy One for children, even though Sarah was barren. Now, you might say 'Look at what is written: *Here, You have given me no seed* (ibid. 15:3)!' But that was not said in prayer, rather as someone speaking before his master. Isaac, however, prayed for his wife, since he knew she was infertile, not he.[72] For Isaac knew a secret of wisdom: Jacob was destined to issue from him with twelve tribes. But he did not know whether through this wife or another, so: *on behalf of his wife.*"[73]

That boy, son of Rabbi Yehudah,[74] asked, "If so, why didn't Isaac love Jacob as much as Esau, since he knew he was destined to arise from him with twelve tribes?"[75]

He replied, "Well spoken! But every species loves its own kind and is drawn to its kind.[76]

“Come and see: Esau issued red, as is written: *The first one came out ruddy…* (ibid. 25:25), quality of Isaac, severe Judgment above,[77] from whom issued Esau, severe Judgment below, resembling his kind.[78] Since every species follows its kind, he loved Esau more than Jacob, as is written: *Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for hunted game* (ibid., 28). Here is written: *because he had a taste for* ציד (*tsayid*), *hunted game*, and there is written: *Hence the saying: Like Nimrod,* גבור ציד (*gibbor tsayid*), *a mighty hunter, before YHVH* (Genesis 10:9).”[79]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, “*The children jostled each other within her, and she said, ‘If so, why should I live?’ So she went* לדרוש (*lidrosh*), *to inquire, of YHVH* (ibid. 25:22). Where did she go? To בי מדרשא (*vei madrasha*), the Academy, of Eber.[80]

“*The children jostled each other within her*, for there that wicked Esau waged battle against Jacob.

“ויתרוצצו (*Va-yitrotsetsu*), *They jostled each other*—they crushed each other, as we say: ‘רצץ (*Retsots*), Crush, its head!’[81] Crushing one another, they split apart.

“Come and see: This one, the side riding the serpent;[82] that one, the side riding the sacred, perfect throne, on the side [138a] of the sun performing with the moon.[83]

“Come and see: Since Esau was drawn after that serpent, Jacob dealt with him tortuously like a serpent who is cunning, as is said: *Now the serpent was sly…*(Genesis 3:1)[84]—cunning.[85] Jacob acted toward him like a serpent necessarily, to draw Esau after the serpent, so that he would separate from him[86] and have no share with him—in this world or in the world that is coming. We have learned: ‘If someone is coming to kill you, anticipate and kill him first.’[87]

“It is written: *In the womb he heeled his brother* (Hosea 12:4), hurling him down to that heel,[88] as is written: *his hand gripping Esau’s heel* (Genesis 25:26),[89] laying his hand on that heel to subdue it.

“Alternatively, *his hand gripping Esau’s heel*, unable to escape him entirely;[90] rather, *his hand gripping*—the moon whose light is concealed on account of Esau’s heel[91]—so he had to deal with him cunningly to thrust him down to cling to his site.[92]

“*He called him Jacob* (ibid.)—the blessed Holy One called him Jacob, undoubtedly![93] Come and see what is written: *Didn’t he rightly call him* יעקב (*Ya’aqov*), *Jacob?* (ibid. 27:36).[94] It is not written: *wasn’t he called*, but rather: *didn’t he call him*.[95]

“ויעקבני (*Va-ya’qeveni*), *He’s deceived me* (ibid.), indeed! The blessed Holy One saw that the primordial serpent was perniciously cunning. As soon as Jacob arrived, He said, ‘This one is certainly just as cunning.’ So He called him יעקב (*Ya’aqov*), Deceiver.

“We have already established that *he called*, anonymously, always implies the final rung, as is written: *He called to Moses* (Leviticus 1:1).[96] Similarly here, *He called him Jacob*. He was never named by a human being. Elsewhere what is written? *The God of Israel called him God* (Genesis 33:20)—the blessed Holy One called Jacob *God*, saying, ‘I am God in the realms above; you are God in the realms below.’[97]

“Come and see: Jacob knew that Esau had to cling to that tortuous serpent, so in all his dealings he conducted himself toward him like another tortuous serpent, [138b] tortuously, cunningly, necessarily. This accords with Rabbi Shim’on’s comment on the verse: *God created the great sea serpents* (ibid. 1:21)—Jacob and Esau;[98] *and every living being that glides* (ibid.)—other rungs between them.[99] Indeed, Jacob became cunning toward that other serpent, and so it had to be.

“Therefore every new moon, a single goat—luring him to his site, so that he will separate from the moon.[100] Similarly on Yom Kippur, offering that goat cunningly to prevail against him, rendering him harmless,[101] as is

written: והשעיר (*Ve-ha-sa'ir*), *The goat, will bear upon itself all their iniquities* (Leviticus 16:22)—Esau, who is שעיר (*sa'ir*), a hairy demon, as has been established.[102] All cunningly, deceptively toward him. Why? Because it is written: *With the crooked, deal tortuously* (2 Samuel 22:27).[103] For he is the wicked serpent—twisted spirit, perniciously cunning, accusing, and seducing above and below. So Israel anticipates and outsmarts him cunningly, tortuously, rendering him powerless.

"Therefore Jacob, mystery of faith, constantly acted toward Esau so as to prevent that serpent from defiling the Sanctuary or even approaching it.[104] Neither Abraham nor Isaac had to conduct himself tortuously, since Esau, aspect of that serpent, had not yet arrived in the world. But Jacob, master of the house,[105] had to confront the serpent, totally denying him the power to defile Jacob's Temple. So Jacob had to act so—more than anyone else in the world. Consequently, Holy Israel was selected as the share of the blessed Holy One,[106] as is written: *For YHVH's share is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance* (Deuteronomy 32:9)."

The boys grew up… (Genesis 25:27).[107] Rabbi El'azar said, "Each one diverged on his path, [139a] one to the side of faith, the other to the side of idolatry.[108] So it had been in Rebekah's womb, each one inclining to his side. For when she engaged in good deeds or passed by an auspicious site for performing a *mitsvah*, Jacob would joyously thrust to come out; and when she went by an idolatrous site, that wicked one would kick to come out, as they have established.[109] Consequently, when they were created[110] and emerged into the world, each one diverged, drawn to his appropriate place. So, *The boys grew up: Esau became a skilled hunter*….

"Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for hunted game (ibid., 28). This has been established, as is written: *a skilled hunter*. Here is written: *a skilled hunter*, and there is

written: *He was a mighty hunter before* YHVH (Genesis 10:9).[111]

"*A man of the field* (ibid. 25:27). What does this mean? Robbing people and murdering them, while pretending to be engaged in prayer,[112] trapping him with his mouth.[113]

"A *man of the field*, for his allotted share was not inhabited land but rather desolate places, wilderness, and fields. So, *a man of the field*.[114]

"Now, you might ask, 'How could Isaac be unaware of all of Esau's wicked deeds, seeing that Shekhinah accompanied him? For if Shekhinah did not abide with him, how could he have blessed Jacob when he later did?'[115]

"Well, certainly Shekhinah dwelled in his home, dwelling with him constantly. But She did not reveal it to him, so that Jacob would be blessed without his intention, rather with the intention of the blessed Holy One, as it had to be.[116] When Jacob entered the presence of his father, Shekhinah entered with him,[117] so Isaac perceived in his mind that he was worthy of being blessed, and he was blessed with the intention of Shekhinah."

Come and see: *Jacob was boiling a stew, when Esau came in from the field, exhausted* (ibid. 25:29). *Jacob was boiling*. Rabbi El'azar said, "They have established that this was for mourning over Abraham;[118] but if so, the verse should read: *Isaac was boiling a stew*.[119] However, Jacob prepared that dish, knowing his root [139b] on the side to which he clung.[120] Therefore he cooked a red dish—lentils—a dish that breaks the power of red blood,[121] to break his power.[122] So he prepared it cunningly in the color of red, and for that dish he sold himself as a slave[123] and sold his birthright to Jacob.

"At that moment, Jacob realized that for the sake of one goat offered by Israel to his rung,[124] he would turn into a servant to his descendants, no longer accusing them.[125] Throughout, Jacob dealt cunningly with Esau because of Esau's cunning rung, so that he could not prevail, would be

overturned—so that his house would not be defiled, defended by him."[126]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "With Laban too this was fitting,[127] for he was a sorcerer, as is written: *I have augured that YHVH has blessed me*…(ibid. 30:27).[128] Even though Jacob was called 'a consummate man,'[129] he was complete precisely so: dealing appropriately with whoever deserved compassion, dealing appropriately with whoever deserved harsh judgment and tortuousness.[130] For he comprised two components,[131] and of him is written: *With the kind, deal kindly; with the crooked, deal tortuously* (2 Samuel 22:26–27). *With the kind*, on the side of *Ḥesed*, Kindness; *with the crooked*, on the side of *Dina Qashya*, Harsh Judgment—all fittingly."

There was a famine in the land… (Genesis 26:1).[132]

Rabbi Yehudah opened, "*YHVH tests the righteous, but the wicked and one who loves violence His soul hates* (Psalms 11:5). How perfectly arranged are the deeds of the blessed Holy One! Whatever He does is based entirely on justice and truth, as is written: *The Rock, His work is perfect*… (Deuteronomy 32:4).[133]

"Come and see: The blessed Holy One did not judge Adam until He had commanded him for his own good,[134] so that his heart and will would not stray on an alien path, so that he would not be defiled. But he wasn't careful and violated his Master's command, after which He imposed punishment upon him. [140a] Nevertheless, He did not punish him as he deserved,[135] postponing His anger, so he endured for a day—which is a thousand years[136]—except for those seventy he gave to King David, who had none at all of his own.[137]

"Similarly, He does not punish a person in accordance with the evil deeds he constantly commits; for if so, the world could not endure. Rather, the blessed Holy One

postpones His anger for the righteous, and for the wicked even more than the righteous! For the wicked, so that they will turn back completely and endure in this world and in the world that is coming, as is written: *As I live—declares YHVH Elohim—I do not desire the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way* וחיה (*ve-ḥayah*), *and live* (Ezekiel 33:11)—*and live* in this world, *and live* in the world that is coming.[138] This is why He always postpones His anger for them; or so that a fine shoot will issue from them into the world[139]—as He generated Abraham from Terah, a fine shoot, stock and root, a fine share for the world.

"However, the blessed Holy One always deals strictly with the righteous in all that they do,[140] because He knows they will not stray right or left. So He tests them, not for His own sake, since He knows their impulse and the strength of their faith, but rather for their sake, to elevate them. As He did with Abraham, for it is written: *God* נסה (*nissah*), *tested, Abraham* (Genesis 22:1). What does *nissah* mean? As is said: *Raise* נס (*nes*), *a banner!* (Isaiah 62:10), *Lift up nes, a banner!* (ibid. 13:2). He raised his banner throughout the world[141]—although this has already been explained[142]—for the blessed Holy One raised Abraham's banner in the eyes of all, as is written: *nissah, He elevated, Abraham*. Similarly, to raise the banner of the righteous, the blessed Holy One tests them, elevating them throughout the world."

He tests the righteous. Why? Rabbi Shim'on said, "Because when the blessed Holy One delights in the righteous, what is written? *YHVH delights in crushing him by disease* (Isaiah 53:10). This has been established,[143] but the reason is that the delight of the blessed Holy One focuses only on soul, not on body; for soul resembles soul,[144] while body is incapable of uniting above—even though the body's image abides in supernal mystery.[145] [140b]

"Come and see: When the blessed Holy One delights in a person's soul, deriving pleasure from her, He strikes the body so that the soul can dominate. For as long as soul

corresponds with body,[146] soul cannot prevail; but once the body is broken, soul becomes dominant.[147]

"*He tests the righteous*. What does this mean? As is said: *a tested stone* (Isaiah 28:16).[148] Similarly, *He tests the righteous*, strengthening him like this *tested stone*, which is *a precious cornerstone* (ibid.). So too, *He tests the righteous*.

"*But the wicked and one who loves violence* שנאה נפשו (*sane'ah nafsho*), *His soul hates*. What does *sane'ah nafsho* mean? Would you ever imagine that the soul of the blessed Holy One hates that wicked one?[149] Rather, that rung upon which all souls depend hates the soul of that wicked one,[150] not wanting her at all, neither in this world nor in the world that is coming. So, *the wicked and one who loves violence—sane'ah nafsho, She hates his soul*, precisely!

"Alternatively, *sane'ah nafsho, His soul hates*, as is said: *YHVH Elohim has sworn by His soul* (Amos 8:6).[151] So, *He tests the righteous*.[152]

"Come and see: When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He commanded him for his own good and endowed him with wisdom, whose rungs he climbed. Descending below, he discovered the craving of the evil impulse and clung to it, forgetting all he had attained of the supernal glory of his Lord.[153]

"Then came Noah. At first is written: *Noah was a completely righteous man* (Genesis 6:9). Later he descended below and saw strong wine, unclarified, one day old.[154] He drank some of it, became drunk, and exposed himself.[155]

"Then came Abraham. He ascended in wisdom, contemplating the glory of his Lord. Afterwards, *there was a famine in the land and Abram went down to Egypt…* (Genesis 12:10).[156] Subsequently what is written? *Abram went up from Egypt…* (ibid. 13:1), ascending to the rung he had attained at first.[157] He entered in peace and emerged in peace.[158]

“Then came Isaac. What is written? *There was a famine in the land… and Isaac went.*[159] Isaac went and later ascended from there in peace.

“Every single one of the righteous is tested by the blessed Holy One, to elevate them in this world and in the world that is coming.[160]

“*When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, ‘She is my sister’* (ibid. 26:7).[161] Just as Abraham had said,[162] because *Shekhinah* accompanied him with his wife,[163] and on account of *Shekhinah* he said this, as is written: *Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister’* (Proverbs 7:4).[164] So he was emboldened to say, *She is my sister*.

“Further, Abraham and Isaac were entitled to this precisely because of the verse: *My sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one!* (Song of Songs 5:2).[165] So it was certainly fitting for them to say, *She is my sister*. Thereby the righteous embrace the blessed Holy One.

“*When he had been there a long time*, [*Abimelech king of the Philistines gazed through the window and saw: here was Isaac* מצחק את רבקה אשתו (*metsaḥeq et Rivqah ishto*), *fondling Rebekah his wife*] (Genesis, ibid., 8)—*et Rivqah ishto*, precisely! This is *Shekhinah*.[166] Just as concerning idolatry, it is written: *They rose* לצחק (*le-tsaḥeq*), *to revel* (Exodus 32:6), so too: *metsaḥeq*, *fondling*. את (*Et*)—*Shekhinah*, who accompanied Rebekah.[167]

“Alternatively, would you ever imagine that Isaac copulated in the daytime? Surely we have learned: ‘Israelites are holy and do not copulate by day.’[168] Would Isaac, who was holy, have copulated by day? Rather, certainly Abimelech was learned and he gazed through astrology, which is a window. Here is written: *through the window*, and there is written: *Through the window she gazed, the mother of Sisera wailed* (Judges 5:28). Just as there through astrology, so here through astrology.[169] He saw that contrary to what Isaac had claimed, he was

actually *fondling* her and she was *his wife*! So, *Ahimelekh called for Isaac and said, 'But here, she is your wife! How could you say, "She is my sister"?'* (Genesis, ibid., 9)."

Rabbi Yose said, "Abimelech would have been justified in doing to Isaac what he did to Abraham, were it not that the blessed Holy One had reproved him previously.[170]

"Come and see what is written: *Because I said to myself, 'There is just no fear of God in this place'* (ibid. 20:n)."[171]

Rabbi Abba said, "Therefore he said, *She is my sister*—to cleave to *Shekhinah*, as is written: *Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister.'* Why?[172] Because they lacked faith. If they had possessed faith, he would not have had to; but since they didn't, he said so. Therefore he said, *Because I said to myself, 'There is just no fear of God* [141a] *in this place'—fear of God* is faith."[173]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Since *Shekhinah* does not dwell outside the land of Israel,[174] *there is no fear of God in this place*—for this is not its site; it does not dwell here.[175] But Isaac embraced faith, seeing *Shekhinah* dwelling in his wife.

"*Abimelech commanded all the people* [*saying, 'Whoever touches this man or his wife will surely be put to death*] (ibid. 26:11). Come and see how patiently the blessed Holy One tolerated the wicked on account of the kindness they extended to the ancient patriarchs! For due to this, Israel did not dominate them until many generations later.[176] Abimelech acted worthily by showing kindness to Isaac, by saying to him, *Here, my land is before you; settle wherever you please* (ibid. 20:15)."[177]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "Woe to the wicked, whose kindness is imperfect![178] Come and see: At first Ephron said, *My lord, listen to me! I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it* (ibid. 23:11). But later he said, *Land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between me and you?* (ibid., 15), and it is written: *Abraham weighed out for Ephron* [*the silver*] (ibid., 16).[179]

“Here too, at first is written: *Here, my land is before you,*[180] but later he said to him, *Go away from us…* (ibid. 26:16).”[181]

Rabbi El’azar responded, “This was kindness toward him, that Abimelech didn’t take anything from him, but rather sent him off with all his wealth, and later he followed after him to make a pact with him.”

Rabbi El’azar said further, “Isaac acted fittingly, for since he knew mysteries of wisdom, he endeavored and dug a well of water, to fortify himself fittingly in faith.[182] Abraham endeavored and dug a well of water.[183] Isaac, following him, endeavored and dug a well of water. Jacob found it prepared and sat down by it.[184] They all went striving after it, to fortify themselves fittingly in perfect faith.

“Now [the people of] Israel hold fast to Her with mysteries of commandments of Torah—as when every single day a person fortifies himself with tassels (which is a commandment), enveloping himself in them;[185] with *tefillin*, placing them on his head and arm, a fitting supernal mystery.[186] For the blessed Holy One appears[187] in a person who crowns himself with *tefillin* and envelops himself in tassels—entirely a mystery of supernal faith. So one unenveloped in this—uncrowned, unfortified with *tefillin* every day—feels abandoned by faith, divested of the awe of his Lord, his prayer improper.

“Therefore the patriarchs fortified themselves in supernal faith—for the sake of the supernal well, in which dwells mystery of perfect faith.”

He moved on from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it… (Genesis 26:22).[188]

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, “*YHVH will guide you* תמיד (*tamid*), *continually, and satisfy your soul* בצחצחות (*be-tsaḥtsaḥot*), *in scorched regions…*

(Isaiah 58:11).[189] This verse has been established and discussed;[190] but Masters of Faith have been fortified by this verse, for it assures them of the world that is coming: *YHVH will guide you continually*—in this world and in the world that is coming.

"*YHVH will guide you*. Since the verse says *YHVH will guide you*, why *tamid*, *continually?* But this is *tamid*—the 'continual' twilight offering,[191] embraced by the arm of Isaac,[192] share in the world that is coming.[193] How do we know this? From David, as is written: *He guides me in paths of righteousness* (Psalms 23:3).[194]

"*And satisfy your soul be-tsaḥtsaḥot, with dazzles*[195]—resplendent speculum, into which all souls delight gazing.[196]

"*And invigorate your bones* (Isaiah, ibid.). Look! The beginning of this verse is inconsistent with its end. If the soul of the righteous is basking in supernal bliss, why *invigorate your bones?*[197] But they have established: this is resurrection of the dead, for the blessed Holy One will one day revive the dead and mend a person's bones, restoring them in a perfect body, while the light of the soul will be intensified within the resplendent speculum, to shine with the body fittingly in full vitality.

"So it is written: *You will be like a watered garden* (ibid.). What does this mean? Its supernal waters never cease for all eternity, this garden, watered by them, is saturated constantly.[198] [141b]

"*Like a spring* (ibid.)[199]—that flowing, gushing river whose waters never cease.[200]

"Come and see: a well of flowing water. This is a supernal mystery within the mystery of faith: a well containing *a spring* filled by that *spring*—two rungs that are one, male and female fittingly.[201]

"Come and see: That *spring* and well are one, all called 'well,' for the inflowing fountain never ceases and the well is filled. Whoever gazes at this well will gaze at the mystery

of supernal faith.[202] This is the symbol of the patriarchs striving to dig a well of water within supernal mystery.[203] One must not separate fountain from well; all is one.

"*He named it* רחובות (*Reḥovot*) (Genesis, ibid.), intimating that his descendants would one day work to enhance this well fittingly through the mystery of sacrifices and offerings.[204] Similarly, *He placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and tend it* (Genesis 2:15)—through sacrifices and offerings.[205] And so that its springs would spread in every direction, as is said: *Your springs will overflow, streams of water* ברחובות (*ba-reḥovot*), *in the broad places* (Proverbs 5:16). Therefore *he named it Reḥovot, Expanses*."

Rabbi Shim'on opened, "חכמות (*Ḥokhmot*), *Wisdom, cries aloud outside;* ברחובות (*ba-reḥovot*), *in the broad places, she raises her voice* (Proverbs 1:20). This verse is a supernal mystery. What is *Ḥokhmot, Wisdoms*?[206] Supernal Wisdom and lesser Wisdom, comprised in the supernal, abiding within.[207]

"*Cries aloud outside*. Come and see: Supernal Wisdom is concealed of all concealed, unknown, unrevealed, as is said: *No human knows its worth* (Job 28:13). Expanding to radiate, it gleams in the mystery of the world that is coming, a world created from it,[208] as we have learned: The world that is coming was created with י (*yod*).[209] This Wisdom is concealed there, and they are one. When all is prepared in the mystery of the world that is coming, as we have said, joy radiates—all in silence, never heard outside.[210]

"Seeking to expand further, there issued from this site fire, water, and air, as has been said, becoming a single voice issuing outside—heard, as has been said.[211] From that point on, it is *outside*—for inside it is silent, never heard; while now that the mystery is heard, it is called *outside*. From here one must prepare himself through action—and inquire.[212]

“*Ba-reḥovot, In the broad places*. Who is *Reḥovot*? That expanse encompassing all sparkling stars,[213] a bubbling spring whose waters never cease, as is said: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden* (Genesis 2:10). That is *Reḥovot, Expanses*. There *she raises her voice*, upper and lower,[214] and all is one.

“Therefore Solomon said, *Prepare your work outside, make it ready for yourself in the field…* (Proverbs 24:27).[215] *Prepare outside*—as has been explained, for it is written: *cries aloud outside*, since from here work is to be prepared, and word is susceptible to questioning, as is written: *For ask now of primal days…from one end of heaven to the other* (Deuteronomy 4:32).[216]

“*Make it ready for yourself in the field—a field blessed by YHVH* (Genesis 27:27).[217]

“Once one knows the mystery of Wisdom and prepares himself within, what is written? *Afterward build your house* (Proverbs, ibid.)—the soul within one’s body,[218] to be cultivated so that one becomes consummate.[219]

“So when Isaac dug and built a well in peace,[220] he called that peace *Reḥovot, Expanses,*[221] all fittingly. Happy are the righteous whose actions verge toward the blessed Holy One, sustaining the world, as is written: *For the upright* ישכנו ארץ (*yishkenu arets*), *will abide on earth* (Proverbs 2:21)—ישכינו ארץ (*yashkinu arets*), will cause earth to abide, as has been established.”[222]

When Isaac was old (Genesis 27:1).[223] Rabbi Shim’on said, “It is written: *God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night* (ibid. 1:5). This verse has been established and explained,[224] but come and see! All actions of the blessed Holy One are true entitites, reflecting supernal mystery. All words of Torah are words of faith, supernal mysteries, fittingly.

“Come and see: Isaac was not as virtuous as Abraham, whose eyes were neither blinded nor dimmed. But here is a supernal mystery, a mystery of faith, as has been said, for it is written: *God called the light Day*—Abraham, light of day, whose light grows brighter and stronger in the ripening [142a] of day.[225] So what is written? *Abraham was old*, בימים בא (*ba ba-yamim*), *coming into days* (Genesis 24:1), into those luminous lights.[226] As he aged, he grew brighter—corresponding to what is said: *shining ever brighter until full day* (Proverbs 4:18).[227] So, *God called the light Day*.

“*And the darkness He called Night*—Isaac, who is *darkness*, proceeding to absorb *Night*.[228] So as he aged, what is written? *When Isaac was old, his eyes were too dim to see*. Certainly so! He had to grow dark, cleaving to *darkness*, his rung, fittingly.”

Rabbi El’azar, his son, came and kissed his hands.[229] He said, “Fine, Abraham shines from the side of his rung; Isaac darkens from the side of his rung. But why of Jacob is it written: *Israel’s eyes were heavy from old age* (Genesis 48:10)?”[230]

He replied, “Precisely so! It is written: *were heavy*, not *were dim*. It is written: *from old age*, not *from his old age*. Rather, *from old age, from* Isaac’s *old age*, from that side they *were heavy*.[231]

“*He could not see*—see properly, but they were not dim;[232] whereas Isaac’s were really dim, totally, so he turned into darkness, embraced by night, fulfilling: *the darkness He called Night*.”

He called Esau, his elder son (ibid. 27:1)[233]—encompassed by the aspect of severe Judgment.[234]

He said, “Here, I am old, and I do not know the day of my death” (ibid., 2).

Rabbi El’azar opened, “*Happy is the one whose strength is in You, highways in his heart* (Psalms 84:6). *Happy is the one whose strength is in You*. Happy is the one

who fortifies himself in the blessed Holy One, placing his strength in Him. Does this mean like Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,[235] who boldly declared: *If it is so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the blazing fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king!* (Daniel 3:17)? Come and see: If the blessed Holy One would not save them and stand by them, then the Holy Name would not be sancitified in the eyes of all, as they declared. Rather, once they realized they had spoken improperly, they reversed themselves and said: *But if not, let it be known to you, O king*—whether He saves us or not, *let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your god!* (ibid., 18).[236]

"We have learned that a word was revealed to Ezekiel, which they heard from him and accepted—namely, that the blessed Holy One would not stand by them, so that they would be rewarded. Then they reversed themselves and said, *But if not, let it be known to you, O king*….[237]

"A person should not embolden himself to say 'The blessed Holy One will save me,' or 'He will do this for me.' Rather, he should place his strength in the blessed Holy One, to help him fulfill the commandents of Torah and walk in the way of truth, for as soon as one comes to purify himself, he is certainly assisted.[238] So should one fortify himself in the blessed Holy One—in order that He may help him—holding fast to Him, not placing his strength in another. So, *whose strength is in You*.

"*Highways in his heart*—refining his heart, free of alien imaginings, rather like a smooth highway traversing every region required. So, correspondingly.

"Alternatively, *Happy is the one whose strength is in You. Strength*, as is said: *YHVH gives strength to His people* (Psalms 29:11),[239] for one should engage in Torah for the sake of the blessed Holy One, since anyone engaging in Torah for ulterior motives—better for him if he had never been created![240]

“מסלות (*Mesillot*), *Highways, in his heart*. What does *mesillot* mean? As is said: סולו (*Sollu*), *Exalt, Him who rides upon the clouds…* (ibid. 68:5), engaging in Torah to elevate the blessed Holy One, rendering Him unique in all the world.[241]

“Come and see: All of Jacob’s actions were for the sake of the blessed Holy One, so He accompanied him constantly, *Shekhinah* never departing from him. Look, when Isaac called Esau his son, Jacob was not there! But *Shekhinah* revealed it to Rebekah, and Rebekah to Jacob.”[242]

Rabbi Yose said, “If, Heaven forbid, Esau had been blessed at that moment, Jacob would have never prevailed; but it issued from the blessed Holy One, everything falling into place fittingly.

“Come and see what is written: *Rebekah loved Jacob* (Genesis 25:28), which has already been discussed.[243] So she sent for Jacob and said to him, *Look, I have heard your father* [*speaking to Esau your brother*]*….Now, my son, listen to my voice…* (ibid. 27:6, 8). It was then the eve of Passover,[244] when the evil impulse must be exterminated and the moon prevail, mystery [142b] of faith;[245] so she prepared two dishes.”[246]

Rabbi Yehudah said, “An intimation here that Jacob’s descendants would one day offer two goats on Yom Kippur, one for *YHVH* and one for Azazel.[247] Therefore she offered two goats—one for a supernal rung and one to subdue the rung of Esau, so he would not dominate Jacob.[248] So, *two goat kids* (ibid., 9), both of which Isaac tasted and ate.

“*He brought him wine and he drank* (ibid., 25). *He brought him wine*, intimating an intimation: from a distant realm he brought it near, from the realm of Esau.”[249]

Rabbi El’azar said, “An intimation: from that wine in which all delight is found, to delight Isaac who needs delight,[250] as delight is needed on the side of the Levites.[251] So, *He brought him wine and he drank*.

“*Rebekah took the precious garments of Esau, her elder son…* (ibid., 15).[252] These are the garments Esau won

from Nimrod, precious garments tracing back to Adam. They came into the hands of Nimrod; clothed in them, he hunted game, as is written: *He was a mighty hunter before YHVH* (Genesis 10:9). Esau went out to the field and waged war against Nimrod, killing him, taking those garments from him,[253] as is written: *Esau came in from the field and he was faint* (ibid. 25:29), and they have established: Here is written, *faint*, and there is written, *for my soul faints before killers* (Jeremiah 4:31).[254]

"Esau stored those garments away with Rebekah, and clothed in them, he went out to hunt game. That particular day he did not take them, and when he went out to the field he was delayed.[255] Now, whenever Esau wore them, they emitted no fragrance at all, but when Jacob wore them, what had been lost reverted to its site and they emitted fragrance. For the beauty of Jacob was the beauty of Adam, so at that moment they returned to their site, emitting fragrance."[256]

Rabbi Yose said, "The beauty of Jacob is the beauty of Adam? But we have learned that the apple of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun![257] Are you saying the same about Jacob?"

Rabbi El'azar replied, "Precisely! At first, before Adam sinned, no creature could gaze at his beauty. Once he sinned, his beauty deteriorated, his height diminished, and he became one hundred cubits tall.[258]

"Come and see: The beauty of Adam is a mystery, for supernal faith depends on that beauty. Therefore, *May the loveliness of YHVH our God be upon us* (Psalms 90:17), and similarly: *to gaze upon the loveliness of YHVH, to contemplate in His temple* (Psalms 27:4). This is precisely the beauty of Jacob, all supernal mystery![259]

"*He smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him* (Genesis 27:27). Come and see! It is not written: *He smelled the fragrance of the garments*, but rather: *the*

fragrance of his garments, as is said: *He wraps in light as in a garment*… (Psalms 104:2).[260]

"Alternatively, *He smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him*, for the moment he put them on, they emitted fragrance, and he did not bless him until he smelled that fragrance because then he knew that he was worthy of blessing. Otherwise, all this fragrance would not have accompanied him, as is written: *He smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him*.

"*He said, 'See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field…'* (Genesis, ibid.). ויאמר (*Va-yomer*), *He said*—an anonymous word: some say it was *Shekhinah*, some say Isaac.[261]

"*Like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH*. Who is *a field?* Field of apple trees, desired and cultivated by supernal patriarchs."[262]

May God give you of the dew of heaven… (ibid., 28).[263]

Rabbi Abba said, "This verse has been established."[264] He opened, saying, "*A song of ascents. In my distress I cried to YHVH, and He answered me* (Psalms 120:1). How many songs and praises did King David chant before the blessed Holy One, all for the purpose of arraying his rung[265] and making himself a name, as is said: *David made a name* (2 Samuel 8:13).[266] He sang this song when he saw this incident of Jacob."

Rabbi El'azar said, "Jacob sang this song, for when his father said *Come near, so I can feel yon, my son. Are you really my son Esau?* (Genesis, ibid., 21),[267] [143a] Jacob felt deeply distressed, fearing that his father would discover him and he would be recognized. What is written? *He did not recognize him because his hands were hairy like the hands of his brother Esau* (ibid., 23). Then he said, *In my distress I cried to YHVH, and He answered me*.

"*O YHVH, deliver my soul from lying lips!* (Psalms, ibid.)—the rung inhabited by Esau, who is *lying lips*. To what does this refer? To the time when that serpent inflicted curses upon the world, cunningly, deceitfully, so the world was cursed.[268]

"Come and see: Isaac told Esau, *Go out to the field and hunt me* צידה (*tsayid*), *game* (Genesis, ibid., 3)—with a ה (*he*), as they have established.[269] Esau went out so that he would receive Isaac's blessing, for he said to him, *I will bless you in the presence of YHVH* (ibid., 7). Now, if he had said *I will bless you* and nothing more, that would have been fine. But as soon as he said *in the presence of YHVH*, the Throne of Glory of the blessed Holy One trembled, saying, 'What if the serpent escapes his curses and Jacob is subjected to them?'[270] At that moment Michael was summoned, and he appeared before Jacob accompanied by *Shekhinah*. Isaac realized this and, seeing the Garden of Eden accompanying Jacob,[271] blessed him in its presence. When Esau entered, Hell entered with him, so *Isaac trembled very violently* (ibid., 33),[272] since he had thought that Esau was not of that side.[273] He opened, saying, *I blessed him! Now blessed he will remain!* (ibid.).

"Therefore Jacob prepared himself cunningly, deceitfully, bringing blessings upon himself, who resembled Adam[274]—blessings snatched from that serpent of *lying lips*, who told so many lies, perpetrated so many insidious acts to lead astray, inflicting curses upon the world.[275] So Jacob came cunningly, deceiving his father in order to bring blessings—seizing from him what he had denied the world.[276] This was measure for measure.[277] Of him is written:[278] *He loved cursing—may it come upon him! He did not want blessing—may it be far from him!* (Psalms 109:17). Of him is written: *Cursed are you among all animals and among all beasts of the field* (Genesis 3:14). He remains so for generations upon generations, while Jacob came and snatched blessings from him. Ever since the days

of Adam, Jacob was destined to seize all these blessings from that serpent—leaving him immersed in curses, unable to escape.

"Inspired by the Holy Spirit, David said, *What will be given to you, what will you gain, O deceitful tongue?* (Psalms 120:3). What does that evil serpent care about inflicting curses upon the world? As they have said, 'A serpent bites and kills—and feels no satisfaction.'[279]

"*O deceitful tongue*—for he deceived Adam and his wife, bringing evil upon him and upon the entire world. Later Jacob came and took back all those blessings.

"*A warrior's sharp arrows* (ibid., 4)—Esau, who threatened Jacob on account of those blessings, as is said: *Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the bL.sing…* (Genesis, 27:41).[280]

"*May God give you of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth*—from above and below, in a single bond.[281]

"*Abundance of grain and new wine*. This has been established,[282] but as is written: *I have never seen a righteous man forsaken or his seed begging bread* (Psalms 37:25).[283] Come and see: *I have been* נער (*na'ar*), *young, and now I am old* (ibid.). They have established: 'This verse was uttered by the Prince of the World.'[284] Therefore he said, *abundance of grain and new wine*.[285]

"*May peoples serve you* (Genesis, ibid., 29)[286]—when Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, as is written: *All the kings of the earth brought their presents* (2 Chronicles 9:23–24).[287]

"*And nations bow down to you* (ibid.)—when King Messiah arrives, as is written: *All kings will bow down to him* (Psalms 72:11)."

Rabbi Yehudah said, "All this applies to when King Messiah arrives, as is written: *All kings will bow down to him, all nations will serve him* (ibid.).

"*Be master over your brothers* (ibid.). הוה (*Heveh*), *Be*—not היה (*Heyeh*), *Be*, or תהיה (*Tihyeh*), *You will be*,[288] because this is a supernal mystery of faith, since these letters are

mysteries of faith: ה (*he*) above, ו (*vav*) in the middle, then ה (*he*) last.[289] So he said, הוה (*Heveh*), *Be, master over your brothers*—dominating them, subduing them when King David arrives."[290]

Rabbi Yose said, "All this applies to when King Messiah arrives, for since Israel has transgressed the words of Torah, *you will tear his yoke from your neck* (Genesis, ibid., 40)."[291]

May God give you (ibid., 28).[292] Rabbi Yose said, "All these [143b] blessings derived from the side of Jacob's share,[293] so he took his own. Isaac wanted to bestow these blessings upon Esau, so the blessed Holy One brought it about that Jacob obtained what was his.

"Come and see: When that serpent inflicted curses upon the world, and the earth was cursed, what is written? *To Adam He said, 'Since you listened to the voice of your wife… cursed is the ground because of you'* (Genesis 3:17),[294] not yielding fruit or verdure fittingly. Conversely: *and of the fat of the earth* (ibid. 27:28).[295]

"*By painful toil you will eat of it* (Genesis 3, ibid.). Conversely: *of the dew of heaven* (ibid. 27:2e).[296]

"*Thorns and thistles it will sprout for you* (ibid. 3:18). Conversely: *abundance of grain and new wine* (ibid. 27:28).

"*By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread* (ibid. 3:19). Conversely: *May peoples serve you*, tilling the earth and cultivating the field, as is said: *Foreigners will be your plowmen and vinedressers* (Isaiah 61:5).[297]

"Jacob obtained all, one balancing the other, taking what was his. The blessed Holy One brought it about that Jacob would receive these blessings so he would cleave to his site and share, and so Esau would cleave to his site and share."[298]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, "But we see that later Esau received the fat of the earth and the dew of heaven, as is written: *Here, from the fat of the earth will be your*

dwelling, and from the dew of heaven above (Genesis, ibid., 39)!”

Rabbi Shim’on replied, “Not so! This unlike that, one unlike the other. How separated are the rungs! Of Jacob is written: *May God give you*, while of this one is written: *will be*.[299] Of Jacob is written: *of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth*, while of Esau is written: *from the fat of the earth and the dew of heaven*.[300] This is unlike that. How widely separated the rungs! For look, of Jacob is written: *May God give you of the dew of heaven*—supernal dew flowing from the Ancient of Days, called *dew of heaven*, supernal Heaven;[301] dew flowing through the rung of *heaven*, and from there to the Holy Apple Orchard.[302] *And of the fat of the earth*—supernal Earth, Land of the Living.[303] Whereas concerning Esau, on earth here below, in heaven here below. Jacob, above, above; Esau, below, below.

“Furthermore: Jacob, above and below; Esau, below.[304] Although it is written: *When you grow restive, you will tear his yoke from your neck* (ibid., 40)—this one here below, but above not at all, as is written: *For YHVH’s share is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance* (Deuteronomy 32:9).[305]

“Come and see: When Jacob and Esau began to receive their blessings, Jacob obtained his share above, while Esau obtained his share below.”

Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Shim’on son of Lekonya said to Rabbi El’azar,[306] “Have you heard anything from your father as to why the blessings Isaac bestowed upon Jacob were not fulfilled, while those bestowed upon Esau were fulfilled entirely?”[307]

He replied, “All those blessings are fulfilled, along with other blessings bestowed upon Jacob by the blessed Holy One.[308] However, Jacob immediately obtained above, Esau below. Later, when King Messiah arises, Jacob will receive above and below, while Esau will be deprived of everything

—left with no share or memory in the world—as is said: *The house of Jacob will be fire, the house of Joseph flame, and the house of Esau stubble…* (Obadiah 1:18),[309] for he will be deprived of everything and Jacob will inherit two worlds, this world and the world that is coming. Of this time is written: *Saviors will climb Mount Zion to execute judgment on Mount Esau, and dominion will be YHVH's* (ibid., 21)—the dominion that Esau obtained in this world will revert to the blessed Holy One alone. Is it now not His? Rather, even though the blessed Holy One reigns above and below, He has granted the other nations, each and every one, an inherited share to utilize in this world; but at that time He will take dominion from all of them, so all will be His, as is written: *Dominion will be YHVH's*, His alone, as is written: *YHVH will be king over all the earth* (Zechariah 14:9)."

Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac (Genesis 27:30).[310] Rabbi Shim'on said, "אך יצא יצא (*Akh yatso yatsa*), *Scarcely going out, had gone out*. Why these two outgoings?[311] The answer is: [144a] one refers to *Shekhinah*, one to Jacob, for when Jacob entered, *Shekhinah* entered with him,[312] and he was blessed in Her presence. Isaac proclaimed the blessings, and *Shekhinah* confirmed them. When Jacob went out, *Shekhinah* went out with him, as is written: *Jacob yatso yatsa*—two outgoings as one.

"*His brother Esau came in from his hunt*. It is not written: *from the hunt*, but rather: *from his hunt*, his own hunt, devoid of blessing. The Holy Spirit cried out, *Do not eat the food of one with an evil eye…* (Proverbs 23:6).[313]

"*He too prepared delicacies and brought them to his father…. 'Let my father get up!'* (Genesis, ibid., 31).[314] His speech was harsh and aggressive, tasteless words: *Let my father get up!*[315] Come and see the difference between Jacob and Esau. Jacob spoke shamefacedly to his father, humbly. What is written? *He came to his father and said, 'Father!'* (ibid., 18). Why so? Because he didn't want to

startle him; rather, entreatingly: *Get up, please, sit, and eat some of my game* (ibid., 19). Whereas Esau said, *Let my father get up!*—as if he were not addressing him.[316]

"Come and see: When Esau entered, Hell entered with him. Isaac trembled in fear, as is written: *Isaac trembled very violently* (ibid., 33).[317] Since it is written: *Isaac trembled*, why *very violently?* Because no such fear or terror had fallen upon Isaac since the day he was created. Even at the moment he lay bound on the altar and saw the knife looming over him, he did not tremble as when Esau entered and he saw Hell accompanying him.[318] Then he said, *Before you came, I blessed him. Now blessed he will remain!* (ibid.)[319] because he saw *Shekhinah* confirming those blessings.

"Alternatively, Isaac said, *I blessed him*, and a voice issued, saying, *Now blessed he will remain!* So the blessed Holy One confirmed those blessings.

"Come and see: All, above and below, confirmed those blessings. Even he, allotted share of Esau,[320] confirmed them, blessing him himself, confirming those blessings, elevating him above his own head. How do we know this? As is written: *He said, 'Let me go, for dawn has risen!' He replied, 'I will not let you go unless you have blessed me'* (ibid., 32:27).[321] *He said, 'Let me go!'* because Jacob had seized him.

"Now, how can a human of flesh and blood take hold of an angel, who is pure spirit, as is written: *He makes His angels spirits* (ibid. 104:4)?[322] Rather, from here we learn that when angels, messengers of the blessed Holy One, descend to this world, they materialize, clothing themselves in a body corresponding to this world.[323] It is fitting not to deviate from the custom of the place where one goes, as has been explained, for when Moses ascended on high, what is written? *He was there with YHVH forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread and drank no water* (Exodus 34:28), because of the custom not to deviate from the place where

one goes. Similarly, when those angels descended below, what is written? *He was standing by them under the tree, and they ate* (Genesis 18:8).[324] Here too, when this angel descended below, he wrestled with Jacob only by being clothed in a body corresponding to this world. So it was that Jacob wrestled with him all night long.

"Come and see: Since their dominion only really prevails at night, the dominion of Esau prevails only in exile, which is night.[325] So he attacked Jacob at night, wrestling with him.[326] When morning came, his strength faded, he could not prevail; then Jacob was empowered, since his dominion prevails in the day. So it is written: *An oracle concering Dumah: One calls to me from Seir, 'Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?'* (Isaiah 21:11).[327] For then prevails the dominion of Esau, who is *Seir*, at night. So when morning came his power faded, and then *he said, 'Let me go, for dawn has risen!' He replied, 'I will not let you go unless* ברבתני (*berakhtani*), *you have blessed me*.' The verse should read: *unless* [144b] תברכני (*tevarekheni*), *you bless* me.[328] Why *unless you have blessed me?* 'Unless you confirm those blessings that father bestowed upon me and not denounce me for them.'[329] What is written? *Your name will no longer be Jacob, but* ישראל (*Yisra'el*), *Israel*... (Genesis 32:29).[330] Why Israel? He said to him, 'Against our will, we must serve you,[331] for by your power you have been crowned above with a supernal rung: ישראל (*Yisra'el*), *Israel, will be your name* (ibid. 35:10), precisely![332]

"*For* שרית (*sarita*), *you have striven, with Elohim* (ibid. 32:29).[333] What does this mean: *with Elohim*? Do you imagine he was referring to himself?[334] Rather, he told him, 'You have striven to join and couple with *Elohim*, in coupling of sun and moon.'[335] Therefore it is not written: *above Elohim*,[336] but rather: *with Elohim*, in a single bond and coupling.

"Alternatively, *He said* (ibid. 32:29),[337] as is written: *He said, 'If you listen carefully to the voice of YHVH your God'* (Exodus 15:26).[338] Here too, *He said, 'Your name will no*

longer be Jacob, but Israel’ Then Jacob was crowned with his rung, becoming Consummation of the Patriarchs.[339] What is written? *He blessed him there* (Genesis, ibid., 30), confirming all those blessings bestowed by his father.”

Rabbi Shim’on opened, “*When a man’s ways please YHVH, He causes even his enemies to be at peace with him* (Proverbs 16:7). Come and see how carefully one should align his paths toward the blessed Holy One, in order to fulfill the commands of Torah! For they have established that a person really has two angelic messengers from above to couple with him, one on the right and one on the left, coupling with him, appearing wherever he does anything, called Good Impulse and Evil Impulse.[340]

“If one comes to purify himself and engage in commands of Torah, that Good Impulse coupled with him overpowers the Evil Impulse, who then makes peace with him, turning into his servant. But when a person relapses, setting out to defile himself, that Evil Impulse overpowers and overwhelms the Good Impulse, as we have established.[341] Indeed, when that person comes to purify himself, how potently he is empowered as the Good Impulse prevails. Then *He causes his enemies to be at peace with him*, for that Evil Impulse is overturned by the Good Impulse.[342] Therefore Solomon said, *Better to be lightly esteemed and have a servant* (ibid. 12:9).[343] What does this mean: *and have a servant?* The Evil Impulse.[344] So when a person follows the commands of Torah, *He causes even his enemies to be at peace with him*—the Evil Impulse.

“Come and see: Since Jacob trusted in the blessed Holy One and all his ways were for His sake, *He caused his enemies to be at peace with him*—Samael, power and strength of Esau, who made peace with Jacob.[345] Since he made peace with him and confirmed those blessings, Esau made peace with him; and until Jacob was at peace with that official appointed over him,[346] Esau did not make

peace with him. So everywhere power below depends on power above.

"*Isaac trembled very violently and said, 'Who* איפה (*eiphoh*)*?'* (Genesis 27:33).[347] What is the meaning of *Who eiphoh?* The verse should read: *Who* הוא זה (*hu zeh*), *was this?* But really: *Who eiphoh?* For *Shekhinah* stood there when Isaac blessed Jacob,[348] so he said, '*Who eiphoh?*[349]—who was standing here, confirming those blessings I bestowed upon him? Surely *now blessed he will remain* (ibid.), for the blessed Holy One approved those blessings!'"

Rabbi Yehudah said, "For having terrified his father Isaac with trembling, Jacob was inflicted with the punishment of Joseph, trembling similarly when they told him *This we have found* (ibid. 37:32).[350] Isaac said, *Who* איפה (*eiphoh*)? With *eiphoh* Jacob was punished, as is written: איפה (*Eiphoh*), *Where, are they pasturing?* (ibid., 16). There Joseph disappeared and Jacob was punished.[351] Even though the blessed Holy One approved those blessings, he was punished with *eiphoh: Eiphoh, Where, are they pasturing?* There he disappeared from him, and he was punished so severely.

"*Isaac trembled* חרדה גדולה (*ḥaradah gedolah*), *violently.*[352] Why *gedolah?* Here is written *gedolah*, and there is written: *Let me not see this* הגדולה (*ha-gedolah*), *great, fire anymore, so I will not die!* (Deuteronomy 18:16), for Hell entered with him.[353]

"עד מאד (*Ad me'od*), *very.*[354] Why *ad me'od?* Here is written: *ad me'od*, and there is written: And *behold, it was* טוב מאד (*tov me'od*), *very good* (Genesis 1:31)—Angel of Death.[355] So he said, *Who* איפה (*eiphoh*), *is to be baked?"*[356] [145a]

When Esau heard his father's words (ibid. 27:34).[357]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "How much harm was inflicted by those tears Esau shed before his father in order to be blessed by him, since he cherished his father's word![358]

"הכי (*Ha-khi*), *Didn't, he rightly name him* יעקב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob?* (ibid., 36).[359] The one who named him named

him.[360] Contemptuously, he spewed a spurtle of spittle.[361] It is not written: *Wasn't he rightly named*, but rather: *Didn't he rightly name him.*[362]

"*He's deceived me* זה פעמים (*zeh fa'amayim*), *this, two times!* (ibid.)[363] Why *this, two times?* The verse should read: *two times*. But a single word appears two times: בכרתי (*bekhorati*), *my birthright*, reappearing once again as ברכתי (*birkhati*), *my blessing* (ibid.)—*zeh, this*, happened two times.[364]

"Similarly, *By now* שבנו (*shavnu*), *we could have returned* זה פעמים (*zeh fa'amayim*), *this, two times* (ibid. 43:10)[365]—a single word, two times. First, we could have returned without being ashamed before that man[366]—שבנו (*shavnu*), *we could have returned;* בשנו (*boshnu*), *we are ashamed*, ashamed before him, whereas we could have returned!

"Similarly, איוב (*Iyyov*), Job, said, *You consider me your* אויב (*oyev*), *enemy* (Job 13:24)—transposing איוב (*Iyyov*), Job, into אויב (*oyev*), *enemy*, as they have established, for it is written: *For He crushes me with a tempest* (Job 9:17).[367]

"Here, *He took* בכרתי (*bekhorati*), *my birthright, and look, now*—the word is transposed—*he's taken* ברכתי (*birkhati*), *my blessing!*

"*Here, I have made him master over you…For you*, איפה (*eiphoh*), *where?* (Genesis 27:37)[368]—there is no one here who can approve blessings for you. *What can I do, my son?* (ibid.). So he blessed him with this world.[369] Contemplating his rung, he said, '*You will live by your sword* (ibid., 40), as befits you, spilling blood and waging war.'[370] Therefore he said, *What can I do?*"

Rabbi El'azar said, "*For you, then, what can I do?* Having said this, why *my son?* Because he said, '*For you, then, what can I do*, since I see you steeped in judgment, sword, and blood, whereas your brother walks in peace? But, *my son*'—*my son*, precisely!—'I brought this upon you because you are *my son.*[371] So *you will live by your sword*, as befits you.'

“*And you will serve your brother* (ibid.). This has not yet been fulfilled, for Esau has not served Jacob,[372] since Jacob did not want it now. Repeatedly he called him *my lord, my lord*[373]—having gazed afar, deferring it to the end of days, as we have said.”[374]

Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Yose were walking on the way. As they were walking, they saw Rabbi Yeisa the Elder walking behind them. They sat until he reached them. Once he did, they said, “Now the way before us is paved!”

They walked on. Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “*Time to act for YHVH* (Psalms 119:126).”[375]

Rabbi Yose opened, saying, “*She opens her mouth with wisdom, Torah of love on her tongue* (Proverbs 31:26).[376] *She opens her mouth with wisdom*—Assembly of Israel.[377] *Torah of love on her tongue*—Israel, tongue of Torah, conversing in it day and night.

“*She opens her mouth with wisdom*—ב (*bet*) of בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *In the beginning* (Genesis 1:1), as they have established.[378]

“*Torah of love on her tongue*—Abraham, through whom He created the world,[379] in whom He converses constantly.[380]

“ב (*Bet*), closed on that side, open on this side.[381] Closed on that side, as is written: *You will see My back* (Exodus 33:23).[382] Open on this side, to turn its face above;[383] open on this side, to receive from above, a portico for welcoming.[384] So it stands at the head of Torah and is subsequently filled.[385]

“*She opens her mouth with wisdom—with wisdom*, literally, as is written: בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *With beginning, God created*.[386]

“*Torah of love on her tongue*, for afterwards it relates: *God said, ‘Let there be light!’ And there was light* (Genesis 1:3).[387]

“*She opens her mouth with wisdom*—ה (*he*) of the Holy Name, comprising all. She is concealed and revealed, totality of above and below, mystery of above and below.[388] *She opens her mouth with wisdom*, for She is concealed, completely unknowable, as is written: *She is hidden from the eyes of all living concealed from the birds of heaven* (Job 28:21),[389] but when She begins to expand through *wisdom* cleaving to Her, within Her, She generates a voice: *Torah of love*.[390]

“*She opens her mouth with wisdom*—final ה (*he*), speech, word dependent on *wisdom*.[391]

“*Torah of love on her tongue*—voice, presiding over speech, conducting it.[392] *Torah of love on her tongue*—Jacob, [145b] above *her tongue*, conducting the word, articulating Her,[393] for there is no speech without voice, as has been established.”[394]

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened after him, saying, “*I, wisdom, dwell with shrewdness; I discover knowledge of devices* (Proverbs 8:12). *I, wisdom*—Assembly of Israel.[395] *Dwell with shrewdness*—Jacob, who was cunning.[396] *I discover knowledge of devices*—Isaac, who devised blessing Esau. But since *wisdom* collaborated with Jacob—who was *shrewdness—I discover knowledge of devices*, for Jacob was blessed by his father and all those blessings rested upon him, fulfilled in him and in his descendants forever and ever. Some have been fulfilled in this world; all will be fulfilled in the time of King Messiah, for then Israel will be one nation, one people of the blessed Holy One, as is written: *I will make them one nation in the land* (Ezekiel 37:22). They will have dominion above and below, as is written: *Behold, coming with the clouds of heaven, one like a human being* (Daniel 7:13)—King Messiah,[397] as is written: *In the days of those kings, the God of Heaven will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed, a kingdom that will not be left to another people. It will crush and consume all these kingdoms, and will itself endure forever*

(ibid. 2:44). So Jacob wanted his blessings deferred to that future time, and he did not acquire them immediately."

Rabbi Yeisa opened after him, saying, "*Do not fear, My servant Jacob—declares YHVH—for I am with you! I will save you from afar, your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob will return and be calm and secure, with no one frightening him* (Jeremiah 46:27–28).[398] This verse has been established,[399] but when Jacob emerged from the presence of his father with those blessings, he contemplated his soul and said, 'I want to defer these blessings till later, to length of days.' He was scared and frightened. A voice issued, saying, *'Do not fear, My servant Jacob!* I will not abandon you in this world. *I will save you from afar*—at the time to which you defer those blessings.[400] *Your seed from the land of their captivity*, for although Esau has already obtained his blessings and will subjugate your children,[401] I will deliver them from his hands, and then your children will subjugate him. *Jacob will return* to those blessings.'

"*Jacob will return—Shekhinah; Jacob will return*, indeed![402]

"*And be calm and secure*, as they have established, from those kingdoms of Babylonia and Edom that enslaved Israel.[403] *With no one frightening them* forever and ever."

They walked on. As they were walking, Rabbi Yose said, "Certainly everything the blessed Holy One does in the world reflects a mystery of wisdom, all to manifest supernal wisdom to human beings, so from that act they will learn mysteries of wisdom. All is fitting, all His actions ways of Torah, for the ways of Torah are ways of the blessed Holy One. Even a tiny word contains countless ways, paths, mysteries of supernal wisdom.[404]

"Come and see, for Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai rendered three hundred legal decisions in the mystery of supernal wisdom based on the verse: *His wife's name was*

Mehetabel daughter of Matred, daughter of Me-zahab (Genesis 36:39).[405] These he revealed only to Rabbi El'azar,[406] who accompanied him, indicating how many supernal mysteries inhere in every single incident of Torah—in every single word lies wisdom, Torah of truth! So those words of Torah are holy words, disclosing wonders, as is said: *Uncover my eyes, so I can see wonders out of your Torah!* (Psalms 119:18).

"Come and see: When that serpent deceived Adam and his wife—approaching the woman, injecting her with slime,[407] thereby seducing Adam—the world was defiled and cursed because of him; he inflicted death upon the entire world. The world stood poised to punish him,[408] until the Tree of Life appeared—atoning for Adam, subduing that serpent[409] so that he would never dominate the seed of Jacob. For when Israel offered a goat, that serpent was overturned, turning into a servant, as has been said.[410] Therefore Jacob offered his father two שעירין (*se'irin*), goats:[411] one to subdue Esau, who is שעיר (*sa'ir*), a hairy demon;[412] one for the rung on which Esau was dependent, to which he clung, as has been said.[413]

"So the world existed, until there appeared a woman resembling Eve and a man resembling Adam, who would deal tortuously, cunningly [146a] with that evil serpent and his rider, as has all been explained."[414]

He opened, saying, *"Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the field*, as has been said,[415] *while Jacob was a simple man, dwelling in tents* (Genesis 25:27). איש תם (*Ish tam*), *A simple man*—גבר שלים (*gevar shelim*), a consummate man, as translated.[416]

"*Dwelling in tents*. Why was he tam? Because of *dwelling in tents*, for he embraced two sides: Abraham and Isaac.[417] So Jacob approached Esau from the side of Isaac, as has been said, for it is written: *With the kind, deal kindly; with the crooked, deal tortuously* (2 Samuel 22:26–27).[418] When he came for blessings, he came with help from above,

with the help of Abraham and Isaac, because of wisdom, as has been said.

"Come and see: When Jacob aroused toward Samael, rung of Esau,[419] who submitted to him, Jacob vanquished him on several flanks, cunningly and tortuously defeating the serpent, defeated solely by the goat.[420] Even though all is one,[421] he also vanquished Samael in another victory, defeating him, as is written: *A man wrestled with him until the rising of dawn, and he saw that he could not prevail against him* (Genesis 32:25–26).

"Come and see the immense virtue of Jacob! For he came[422] seeking to eliminate him from the world, and that night was the night on which the moon was created;[423] yet Jacob remained alone, unaccompanied by anyone.[424] Now, we have learned: One should not venture out alone at night, especially on the night when the luminaries were created,[425] since the moon is defective, as is written: *Let there be* מארת (*me'orot*), *lights* (ibid. 1:14), spelled deficiently.[426] Yet that night he remained alone! Now, when the moon is defective, the evil serpent is empowered to prevail;[427] so Samael came and accused him, seeking to annihilate him from the world.

"But Jacob was strong on all sides: side of Isaac and side of Abraham, who constitute the potency of Jacob. Approaching on the right, he saw Abraham, potently empowered;[428] approaching on the left, he saw Isaac, empowered with severe Judgment.[429] Approaching the torso, he saw Jacob,[430] empowered on both these sides surrounding him, from here and from there. So *when he saw that he could not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his thigh* (ibid. 32:26)—a site outside the torso, one pillar of the torso.[431] Then, *the socket of Jacob's thigh was wrenched* (ibid.).

"Once morning aroused and night had passed, Jacob was invigorated—while the power of Samael languished, so he said, *Let me go!* (ibid., 27).[432] His turn had come to

chant morning song; he had to leave,[433] so he confirmed the blessings and added another one, as is written: *He blessed him there* (ibid., 30).[434]

"Come and see how many blessings Jacob received. One from his father, tortuously gaining all those blessings. One from *Shekhinah*, bestowed upon him by the blessed Holy One when he returned from Laban, as is written: *God blessed Jacob*.[435] One offered him by that angel appointed over Esau. One, another blessing bestowed upon him by his father when he went to Paddan Aram, as is written: *May El Shaddai bless you and make you fruitful and numerous* (ibid. 28:3). Seeing himself endowed with all these blessings, Jacob wondered, 'Which of these blessings should I utilize now?' He decided, 'I will use the weakest one now.' Which is that? This last one, offered him by his father, for although it is potent, he said, 'It is not as potent for dominion in this world as the first one.'[436] Jacob said, 'Now I will take this one and use it, reserving all those others for when I and my children after me will need them.[437] When is that? When all nations gather to annihilate my children from the world.' As is written: *All nations surrounded me; by the name of YHVH I will surely cut them down. They surrounded me on every side; by the name of YHVH I will surely cut them down. They surrounded me like bees; they were extinguished like burning thorns; by the name of YHVH I will surely cut them down* (Psalms 118:10–12). Look, here are three,[438] corresponding to the three remaining ones! One, the first blessings of his father. Two, the blessings bestowed upon him by the blessed Holy One. Three, the blessings offered him by that angel. Jacob said, 'There they will be needed against all the peoples, nations, and tongues of the entire world. So I will reserve them for then, while now against Esau, this is enough.'

"This can be compared to a king who had many powerful legions—countless tested warriors to wage battles, poised to attack mighty kings. [146b] Meanwhile,

he heard about a ravaging robber. He said, ‘Let these gatekeepers go there!’ They asked him, ‘Of all your legions, are you only sending these?’ He replied, ‘To deal with that robber these will suffice, since I am keeping all my legions and warriors in reserve for when I need to confront those powerful kings on the day of battle.’

“Similarly, Jacob said, ‘To deal with Esau, these blessings will suffice for now, while the rest I will reserve for when my children need them to confront all the kings and rulers of the entire world. When that time arrives, those blessings will rouse in every direction, and the world will be established firmly, fittingly. From that day on, this kingdom[439] will dominate all other kingdoms, as has been established, for it is written: *It will crush and consume all these kingdoms, and will itself endure forever* (Daniel 2:44)—namely, that rock hewn from the mountain *not by hands,*[440] as is said: *From there, the Shepherd, Rock of Israel* (Genesis 49:24). Who is the *Rock?* Assembly of Israel,[441] as is said: *And this rock that I set up as a pillar will be a house of God* (Genesis 28:22).”[442]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “From here:[443] *A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob* (Isaiah 10:21)—the other, remaining blessings. Similarly, it is written: *The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations*—among all the nations, not just Esau—*like dew from* YHVH (Micah 5:6–7).”[444]

Rabbi Yeisa opened, “*A son honors his father, and a servant his master* (Malachi 1:6). *A son*—Esau, for no one in the world ever honored his father as much as Esau honored his, and the honor he rendered to him granted him dominion in this world.[445]

“*And a servant his master*—Eliezer, Abraham’s servant, as they have established.[446] For here was a person who came to Haran with so much wealth, so many presents and gifts, loaded camels;[447] yet he didn’t claim to Bethuel and Laban that he was an intimate friend of Abraham or someone coming at Abraham’s request. Rather, even before

he spoke his words,[448] what is written? *He said, 'I am Abraham's servant'* (Genesis 24:34), and subsequently, *my master, my master,*[449] in order to honor Abraham. That honor and graciousness prolonged his life enduringly.[450]

"Similarly with Esau, the honor he rendered his father prolonged his dominion so persistently in this world, while those tears prolonged Israel's subjugation to him,[451] until Israel returns to the blessed Holy One with weeping and tears, as is written: *With weeping they will come; with supplications I will conduct them…* (Jeremiah 31:9). Then, *Saviors will climb Mount Zion to execute judgment on Mount Esau, and dominion will he* YHVH*'s* (Obadiah 1:21)."

פרשת ויצא

Parashat Va-Yetse

“HE LEFT” (GENESIS 28:10–32:3)

Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran (Genesis 28:10).

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, “*The sun rises and the sun sets, and pants toward the place where he rises* (Ecclesiastes 1:5). This verse has been established,[1] but *the sun rises*—Jacob,[2] when he was in Beer-sheba;[3] *and the sun sets*—when he went to Haran, as is written: *He stayed there for the night because the sun had set* (Genesis, ibid., 11).[4] *And pants toward his place*, [147a] *shining forth there*, as is written: *He lay down in that place* (ibid.).[5]

“Come and see: Although the sun illumines the whole world, his journeyings bear in two directions, as is said: *moving toward the south, circling toward the north* (Ecclesiastes, ibid., 6), for one is right, the other left.[6] Every day he flows forth from the east, heading south, then north, and from the north to the west;[7] then the sun is drawn in, inclining west. Issuing from the east, inclining west. Issuing from the east, as is written: *Jacob left Beer-sheba*. Inclining west, as is written: *and set out for Haran*.”

Rabbi Shim’on said, “He left the sphere of the land of Israel, as is written: *Jacob left Beer-sheba*,[8] and went to an alien domain, as is written: *and set out for Haran*—land of alien dominion.”[9]

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “When the sun inclines to the west, this west is called site of the sun, his throne, place of his abode, as is written: *and pants toward his place, shining forth there*, heading there to illumine it, conveying all lights, gathering them there.[10] This corresponds to what we have learned: ‘The blessed Holy One puts on *tefillin*,’[11] for He receives all supernal crowns. Who are they? Mystery of Supernal Father, mystery of Mother, who are *tefillin* of the head,[12] as we have learned: ‘A priest receives at the head.’[13] After receiving Father and Mother, He receives right and left, thereby receiving all; thereby the blessed Holy One receives all.”

Rabbi El’azar said, “Beauty of Israel[14] receives all, and when Assembly of Israel is drawn above,[15] She too receives all: World of the Male, blessed Holy One,[16] and World [147b] of the Female, of the blessed Holy One.[17] Just as all lights radiate from that world, so all is absorbed by this world,[18] one corresponding to the other. So it is called שבע באר (*Be’er Sheva*), Beer-sheba.

“Come and see: *Be’er Sheva*—this Jubilee; *Be’er Sheva*—even Sabbatical. All is the blessed Holy One, for one corresponds to the other.[19] The sun shines only from Jubilee, from *Be’er Sheva*, so *Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran*—the west.”

Rabbi Shim’on said, “*Jacob left Beer-sheba*—the west, Sabbatical year; *and set out for Haran*—year of foreskin,[20] for he left the holy domain[21] for an alien domain, fleeing from his brother, as has been said.[22]

“When he reached Bethel, within the holy domain,[23] what is written? *He encountered a certain place* (Genesis 28:11). Which place?”

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “The place we have mentioned, as is written: *and pants toward his place* (Ecclesiastes, ibid.).[24]

“*He stayed there for the night because the sun had set*, as is said: *pants, shining forth there* (ibid.), for he came to illumine it.[25]

"*He took of the stones of the place* (Genesis, ibid.).[26] It is not written: *the stones of the place*, but rather: *of the stones of the place*[27]—precious stones, fine pearls, twelve supernal stones,[28] as is written: *twelve stones* (Joshua 4:3),[29] underneath which lie twelve thousand, myriads of hewn stones,[30] all stones. So, *of the stones of the place*, not: *the stones of the place*—the place of which we have spoken.

"*And put them* מראשותיו (*mera'ashotav*), *at his heads* (Genesis, ibid.). At whose heads?[31] *At the heads* of that place.[32] What does *mera'ashotav* mean? If you say, 'Like a person putting something under his head'—no! Rather, *mera'ashotav, at its heads*, at the four heads, directions of the world: three stones to [148a] the north, three to the west, three to the south, three to the east, with that *place* above them, arrayed upon them.[33]

"Then, *he lay down in that place* (ibid.). Once the bed was prepared, he lay upon it. Who lay upon it? The sun.[34] So of Jacob is written: *He sat up on the bed* (ibid. 48:2), for he and no one else was entitled to this.[35] Therefore, *he lay down in that place*, and so it is written: *The sun rises and the sun sets*."

One day Rabbi Yitsḥak was sitting in front of the Cave of Ramification.[36] A certain man passed by along with his two sons, and one said to the other, "This intensity of the sun derives from the south,[37] and the world endures only by virtue of the wind, for wind is vitality, consummation of all directions. If not for its consummate existence, the world could not endure."[38]

His younger brother said to him, "If not for Jacob, the world would not endure![39] Come and see: When his sons unified supernal unification, proclaiming, *Hear O Israel! YHVH our God, YHVH is one!* (Deuteronomy 6:4), this was supernal perfection, unifying unitary unification.[40] Then came their father, Jacob the Elder, who took his house and

placed it in a single bond with the Patriarchs—so that male and female would join as one."[41]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "I'll join them and hear what they're saying." He walked along with them.

That man opened, saying, "*Arise, O YHVH, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your might!* (Psalms 132:8). *Arise, O YHVH, to Your resting place*—like someone saying, 'Let the king rise and go to rest, to his restful bedroom.' There are two who said *Arise, O YHVH!:* Moses and David. Moses said, *Arise, O YHVH! May Your enemies be scattered!* (Numbers 10:35); David said, *Arise, O YHVH, to Your resting place!* What is the difference between them? Moses spoke like someone enjoining his house, enjoining Her to wage war against his enemies.[42] David invited Him to rest, like someone inviting his master, inviting the King along with the Queen, as is written: *Arise, O YHVH, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your might!*—so as not to separate them.[43]

"May Your priests be clothed in righteousness; may Your faithful sing for joy! (Psalms, ibid., 9). From here we learn that whoever invites a king should alter [148b] his behavior to delight the king.[44] If the king is accustomed to being entertained by common jesters, then he should arrange for him redheaded regal jesters[45] and commanders,[46] or if not, then he himself, for the king's amusement.[47]

"Come and see: When David invited the King and Queen to rest, what did he do? In place of the King's jesters, he substituted redheaded regal ones. Who? As is written: *May Your priests be clothed in righteousness; may Your faithful sing for joy!* (ibid.). *May your faithful sing for joy?* The verse should read: *May Your Levites sing for joy*, for only they engage in joyous song; they are the royal jesters.[48] Yet now David, having invited Him to rest, turned the *priests* and *faithful*[49] into royal jesters! The blessed Holy One said to him, 'Not so!' He replied, 'When You are in Your palace, You act according to Your will, but now that I

have invited You, it depends on my will, which is to present these more distinguished ones, even though it is not their habit.'

"From here we learn that in his own house one may arrange things as he pleases, but when invited out he should fulfill the will of his host, whatever he arranges.[50] For look, David replaced the Levites with priests, yet the blessed Holy One affirmed the matter according to his wish!

"David exclaimed, '*For the sake of David Your servant, do not reject the face of Your anointed one!* (ibid., 10). May the arrangement I prepared not be rejected!'

"The blessed Holy One replied, 'David, by your life, I will not even use My own vessels, but yours instead.'[51] The blessed Holy One did not stir from there until He had given presents and gifts, as is written: *YHVH swore to David, a truth He will not renounce: 'Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne'* (ibid., 11)."

Rabbi Yitsḥak came and kissed him, saying, "If I walked this way just to hear this, I am satisfied!"[52]

One of his sons opened, saying, "*Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran*. This corresponds to what is written: *Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife* (Genesis 2:24).[53]

"Alternatively, *Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran*—alluding to when Israel left the Temple and were exiled among the nations,[54] as is said: *All the splendor of the daughter of Zion has left her* (Lamentations 1:6), and similarly: *Judah has gone into exile because of affliction* (ibid., 3)."

The younger one opened, saying, "*He encountered a certain place and stayed there for the night because the sun had set*… (Genesis 28:11).[55] What is the meaning of: ויפגע (*Va-yifga*), *He encountered, a certain place?* A king who comes to visit his consort must למפגע (*le-mifga*), entreat, her,[56]

so that she will not seem like a piece of abandoned property.[57] Furthermore, even if he possesses golden beds and elaborately embroidered bolsters in a spacious palace,[58] he should not spend the night there. If she prepares a bed on the ground in a castle[59] of straw, he should leave his and spend the night there, giving her pleasure.[60]

"As we learn here, for as soon as he came to Her,[61] what is written? *He took of the stones of the place and put them at his head and lay down in that place* (ibid.), to give Her pleasure, for even the stones of Her house enamored him to stay."

Rabbi Yitsḥak wept and rejoiced, saying, "With such pearls in your hands, how can I not follow you!"[62]

They replied, "You go on your way, while we enter town for the wedding celebration of this son of mine."[63]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "Now I should be on my way." [149a]

He went and arrayed words in the presence of Rabbi Shim'on. Rabbi Shim-'on said, "Truly well spoken! All pertains to the blessed Holy One."[64]

He continued, "These words derive from descendants of Rabbi Tsadok the Feeble. Why was he called Feeble? Because for forty years he fasted over Jerusalem, so that it would not be destroyed in his lifetime.[65] For every single word of Torah, he used to expound supernal mysteries, extending a path by which inhabitants of the world could conduct themselves."

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "Just a few days later I encountered that man, accompanied by his younger son. I asked him, 'Where is your other son?'

"He replied, 'I held a wedding celebration for him, and he stayed with his wife.'[66]

"Once he recognized me, he said, 'By your life, I didn't invite you to my son's wedding celebration because of three

things. First, I didn't know you or recognize you, and since a person should be invited according to his stature, perhaps you are eminent and I would have blemished your dignity. Second, perhaps you were rushing, and I didn't want to bother you. Third, so you wouldn't be embarrassed in the presence of the company, since it is our custom that everyone dining with the groom and bride offers them gifts and presents.'[67]

"I said to him, 'The blessed Holy One will judge you favorably!'

"Then I asked him, 'What is your name?'

"He replied, 'Tsadok the Younger.'

"It was then that I learned from him thirteen mysteries in Torah, and three from his son: one concerning prophecy and two concerning dreams.[68]

"He said,[69] 'What is the difference between prophecy and dream? Prophecy derives from World of the Male,[70] dream from World of the Female;[71] from one to the other, a descent of six rungs.[72] Prophecy, on the right and the left;[73] dream, on the left.[74] Dream diverges into countless rungs below,[75] so dreams pervade the entire world—yet corresponding to one's rung, he sees; corresponding to each person, his rung.[76] Prophecy spreads only in its domain.[77]

"'Come and see what is written: *He dreamed: Here, a ladder set up on earth, its head reaching to heaven* (Genesis 28:12).'[78]

"He opened, saying, 'היה היה (*Hayoh hayah*), *Happening it happened*,[79] *that the word of YHVH came to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Kevar. There the hand of YHVH came upon him* (Ezekiel 1:3). *Hayoh hayah, Happening it happened*—prophecy happened at that particular moment, being essential for exile,[80] since *Shekhinah* descended among Israel in exile.[81] Ezekiel saw what he saw at that very moment, even though that site was unsuitable.[82] So, *Hayoh hayah, Happening it happened*.

“‘What is the meaning of *Hayoh hayah? Hayoh*, above; *hayah*, below. As is written: *a ladder set up on earth, its head reaching to heaven*—moving above, moving below.[83] *Hayoh hayah*, one above, one below.

“‘Come and see: This ladder is planted firmly in two worlds, above and below, *in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Kevar. In the land of the Chaldeans*—in a place where exile prevails. Even so, על נהר כבר (*al Nehar Kevar*), *by the River Kevar*. What is *Nehar Kevar, the River Kevar*? That was *kevar*, already—previously,[84] for *Shekhinah* [149b] dwelled on it, as is written: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four riverheads* (Genesis 2:10).[85] This is one of those four rivers,[86] and since She dwelled on it previously, manifesting there already, She dwelled there now, revealing Herself to Ezekiel.

“‘Come and see: *He dreamed*. Was She revealed in a dream to Holy Jacob, Consummate Patriarch?[87] In such a sacred site he saw only a dream?[88] Yet at that time Jacob was not yet married[89] and Isaac was still alive.[90]

“‘Now, you might say “Look, even after he was married, it is written: *I saw in a dream* (ibid. 31:10)!” But there the place proved decisive[91] and Isaac was still alive, so *dream* is mentioned. Later, when he entered the Holy Land together with the tribes, consummating the essence of the house and the joyous mother of children,[92] it is written: *God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan Aram, and He blessed him* (ibid. 35:9), and similarly: *God spoke to Israel in visions of the night* (ibid. 46:2)—here *dream* is not mentioned since this issued from another, higher rung.[93]

“‘Come and see: Dream is transmitted by Gabriel, who stands below, on the sixth rung from prophecy.[94] Vision, by the rung of that creature who rules the night.[95]

“‘Now, you might say “Look at what is written: *Gabriel, help this man understand the vision* (Daniel 8:16)!”[96] Certainly so! For the contents of a vision are more

concealed, while a dream is more explicit, clarifying the concealment of the vision. So Gabriel was assigned to clarify the content of the vision, more concealed.

"'Therefore concerning vision it is written: וירא (*Va-yera*), *He appeared* (Genesis 18:1); וארא (*Va-era*), *I appeared* (Exodus 6:2).[97] Why? Because *mar'eh*, a vision, resembles *mar'ah*, a mirror, in which all images appear. So, *Va-era, I appeared*—I revealed My image *through El Shaddai*,[98] who is *mar'ah*, a mirror, displaying another image, reflecting all supernal images.[99]

"'So at that time[100] it is written of Jacob: *He dreamed: Here, a ladder set up on earth*. What does *ladder* imply? A rung on which other rungs depend.[101]

"'*Its head reaching to heaven*, so as to be linked with it. *Its head reaching to heaven*. Who is *its head*? Head of that ladder. Who is that? The one of whom is written: *head of the bed* (Genesis 47:31),[102] for He is the *head* of this *bed*, which shines from Him.[103]

"'*Reaching to heaven*, for He is consummation of the body, standing between above and below, just as covenant is consummation of the body, standing between thighs and torso.[104] So, *reaching to heaven*.

"'*And here, angels of God ascending and descending on it* (ibid. 28:12)—deputies of all nations who ascend and descend on this ladder.[105] When Israel sins, this ladder is lowered and they ascend;[106] when Israel rectifies its actions, this ladder ascends, they all descend below, and their dominion vanishes. All depends on this ladder. Here Jacob saw in his dream dominion of Esau, dominion of other nations.[107]

"'Alternatively, *and here, angels of God ascending and descending* בו (*bo*), *because of him*.[108] Because of whom? Head of that ladder. For when its head withdraws, the ladder is subdued and they all ascend;[109] when the head unites with it, the ladder ascends and they all descend. All is one word.[110]

"'It is written: *God appeared to Solomon in a dream by night and said to him, "Ask what I should give you"* (1 Kings 3:5).[111] Now, you might say "Here, in a dream! What [150a] authority does a dream have to do this?"[112] But here rung merged with rung—upper rung with lower rung.[113] For until now, Solomon was incomplete. As soon as he attained perfection, it is written: *YHVH gave Solomon wisdom* (1 Kings 5:26), and similarly: *The wisdom of Solomon increased* (ibid., 10),[114] for the moon became full,[115] the Temple was built, and then Solomon saw wisdom eye-to-eye and had no need of dreams.

"'After he sinned, he needed dreams as before, so it is written: *who had appeared to him twice* (ibid. 11:9).[116] Was it twice and no more? Rather the aspect of dream manifested twice, the aspect of wisdom every day. Even so, the aspect of dream excelled that of all other humans, since rung merged with rung, vision with vision.[117] Now, though, toward the end of his days, more obscurely, because he sinned and the moon verged on defectiveness. Why? Because the sacred covenant was violated when he engaged with foreign women.[118] This was the condition the blessed Holy One had stipulated with David, as is written: *If your sons keep My covenant..., their sons also*, עדי עד (*adei ad*), *until forever, will sit upon your throne* (Psalms 132:12). What does *adei ad, until forever*, mean? Corresponding to what is written: *as the days of the heavens over the earth* (Deuteronomy 11:21).[119] Since Solomon failed to keep this covenant properly, the moon began to wane and turn defective, so in the end he needed a dream. Similarly, Jacob needed a dream, as we have said.

"'*Here, YHVH* ניצב עליו (*nitstsav alav*), *was standing upon it* (Genesis 28:13).[120] Here he saw the cluster of faith as one.[121] *Nitstsav, was standing, upon it*, as is said: נציב (*netsiv*), *a pillar, of salt* (ibid. 19:26),[122] a mound, for all rungs stand as one upon that ladder, all clustering in a single cluster, since that ladder is placed between two sides, as is written:

I am YHVH, God of Abraham your father and God of Isaac (ibid. 28:13)—two sides, on the right and the left.[123]

"'Alternatively, *Here, YHVH was standing* עליו (*alav*), *upon him*—upon Jacob,[124] so that all would become a holy chariot: right, left, Jacob in their midst,[125] and Assembly of Israel linking with them, as is written: *I am YHVH, God of Abraham your father and God of Isaac: the land*.[126] How do we know that Jacob is in the middle? This is implied by what is written: *God of Abraham your father and God of Isaac*, rather than: *God of Isaac your father*. Since he is linked to Abraham, he is consequently in the middle. Then, *the land on which you lie* (ibid.)[127]—all one holy chariot. Here he saw that he would become Consummation of the Patriarchs.[128]

"'Come and see: *God of Abraham your father*. Once He said *Abraham your father*, he was certainly in the middle. *And God of Isaac*—intimating here that he was linked to two sides, embracing both: linked to one side, as is written: *Abraham your father;* linked to the other side, as is written: ואלהי (*ve-lohei*), *and God of, Isaac*, the extra ו (*vav*) added to Isaac revealing that Jacob embraces both sides.[129]

"'Since Jacob was not married, nothing more is said explicitly,[130] though it is conveyed explicitly to one who knows the ways of Torah. After he married and engendered, this is said to him explicitly, as is written: *There he set up an altar, and the God of Israel called him God* (ibid. 33:20).[131] From here we learn that whoever is incomplete below is incomplete above.[132] Jacob is different, for he was complete, but not openly.[133]

"'Now, if you say he was complete even then—no! Rather, he saw that he would be complete eventually. And you might say, "Look at what is written: *Here, I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go* (ibid. 28:15)!"[134] True, the providential protection of the blessed Holy One never left Jacob—whatever he needed in this world—but in the supernal world,[135] not until he was complete.

"'*Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely YHVH is in this place*, ואנכי (*va-anokhi*), *and I, I did not know!"* (ibid., 16). Why *and I, I did not know?* Is it any wonder that he didn't know?[136] Rather, *va-anokhi, and I, I did not know* corresponds to: *I have not sweetened the face of YHVH* (1 Samuel 13:12).[137] He said, "Has all this been revealed to me, and yet I haven't endeavored to know *Anokhi*, entering under the wings of *Shekhinah*, becoming complete?"

"'Come and see what is written: *She said, "If so, why Anokhi?"* (Genesis 25:22).[138] Every single day Rebekah saw the radiance of *Shekhinah* [150b] in her dwelling[139] and prayed there, but as soon as she felt pangs in her womb, what is written? *She went to inquire of YHVH* (ibid.), leaving this rung for another rung. So it is written: *Why Anokhi?*[140] Similarly, Jacob said, "Have I seen so much, and yet *Anokhi I did not know*?" Because he was alone[141] and had not entered under the wings of *Shekhinah*.

"'Immediately, *He was awestruck, and said, "How awesome is this place!"* (ibid. 28:17)[142]—a twofold word. *How awesome is this place!* First, referring to that *place* mentioned previously.[143] Second, referring to this sign of the sacred covenant, which must not stagnate.[144] Although these are two aspects, it is one.[145]

"'He said, "*This is none other than the house of God!*" (ibid.)—*this* must not stagnate; *this* must not exist alone.[146] Its fulfillment is none other than *the house of God*,[147] performing with it, creating fruit within it,[148] pouring blessings into it from all smooth members of the body;[149] for this is the gate of the whole body, as is written: *this is the gate of heaven!* (ibid.)—gate of the body, indeed![150] Gate through which blessings pour below—fastened above, fastened below. Above, as written: *this is the gate of heaven!*[151] Below, as written: *This is none other than the house of God!*[152] So, *he was awestruck, and said, "How awesome is this place!"* Yet human beings do not consider

its precious glory, whereby one becomes complete above and below.’[153]

“His father came and kissed him.”[154]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, “When I heard these words from his mouth, I wept. I exclaimed, ‘Blessed is the Compassionate One who has not abolished supernal wisdom from the world!’

“I accompanied them for three parasangs[155] until we entered town together. They had hardly entered before that man arranged a match for his son, saying, ‘May your words not be in vain!’[156]

“I said, ‘This is what Rabbi Shim’on said, that these words all inhere in a mystery of wisdom, signifying other words, other entities.’[157]

“When I arrayed words in the presence of Rabbi Shim’on, he said, ‘Do not say these are words of a child! These are supernal words, all inscribed in the mystery of wisdom!’”

Jacob made a vow, saying, “If Elohim will be with me and watch over me on this way…” (Genesis 28:20).[158]

Rabbi Yehudah said, “Since the blessed Holy One promised him all this,[159] why didn’t he trust? How could he say, *‘If Elohim will be with me…’?* Rather, Jacob thought, ‘I have dreamed a dream. Now, some dreams are true and some are false. If it is fulfilled, then I will know it is a dream of truth.’[160] So he said, *‘If Elohim will be with me*, as I have dreamed, *then YHVH will be to me* לאלהים (*le-lohim*), *to Elohim* (ibid., 21)—I will draw blessings from the bubbling spring of all to this site, called *Elohim*.’[161]

“Come and see: Israel, being in the middle, receives all, receiving first from the fount of all.[162] After reaching him, it flows on to this site,[163] as implied by what is written: *YHVH will be to me*, first; then, all *le-lohim*, *to Elohim*. ‘Just as *Elohim*

will protect me and provide me with all these benefits, so will I conduct all those blessings to Him from my site, connecting the nexus of all with Him.[164] When? ושבתי (*Ve-shavti*), *I will return, in peace to my father's house* (ibid.), when I am sitting on my rung, sitting on the rung of peace to enhance *my father's house—ve-shavti, I will sit, on peace*, precisely![165]—then *YHVH will be to me, to Elohim*.'

"Alternatively, '*I will return in peace to my father's house*, for there is the Holy Land,[166] where I will be complete, והיה יהוה לי (*ve-hayah YHVH li*), *and YHVH will be mine*. In that place I will ascend fittingly from this rung to another rung,[167] where I will perform His rite.'"[168]

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, "*Words of iniquity overwhelm me; our transgressions You will purge* (Psalms 65:4). This verse is difficult because its end is inconsistent with its beginning, and its beginning with its end![169] But David prayed for himself, and then for everyone. *Words of iniquity overwhelm me*. David said, 'I know that I myself have sinned, but countless sinners in the world are more overwhelmed by their sins than I. This being so, for me [151a] and for them: *our transgressions You will purge*.'

"Come and see: When sins abound in the world, they ascend to the site where the Book of Sinners lies open,[170] as is said: *The court was seated and the books were opened* (Daniel 7:10). That book is above David's head,[171] so *words of iniquity overwhelm me*,[172] and therefore, *our transgressions You will purge*. So Jacob did not believe. If you say he didn't believe in the blessed Holy One—no! Rather, he didn't believe in himself, lest he sin, and that sin prevent him from returning in peace, and protection be withdrawn from him. So he didn't believe in himself.[173]

"*And YHVH will be to me Elohim*. 'When I return in peace, I will face even Compassion as Judgment, for I will serve Him constantly.'"[174]

Rabbi Aḥa said, "Jacob said, 'Now I don't need Judgment.[175] When I return to father's house, I will merge

with Judgment, bonding with it.'"[176]

Rabbi Yose said, "Not so! Rather, he said, 'Now *if Elohim will be with me*—I need Judgment to protect me[177] until I return in peace to father's house. Once I return in peace, I will merge Compassion with Judgment, clustering in a faithful cluster, all coalescing as one.'

"*And this stone that I set up as a pillar will be a house of Elohim* (Genesis 28:22). 'For then all will be a single cluster, this *stone* blessed from right and left, blessed from above and below—because I will give a tithe of all.'"[178]

Rabbi Abba said, "Look at what is written: *He took of the stones of the place* (ibid., 11). Now, if you say this is the supernal stone,[179] there are many stones serving as the foundation upon which it rests,[180] yet it is written: *This stone that I set up as a pillar*![181] Because he said, *This is none other than the house of Elohim!* Here he raised Her as a supernal pillar, attributing to Her all the glory of *this*, since *this* sustains below only through *the house of Elohim*.[182] Fine, and so it is written: *that I set up as a pillar*.

"*Will be a house of Elohim*, forever.[183] *A house of Elohim*? The verse should read: *a house of YHVH*, as is said: *to establish the house of YHVH*, and similarly: *Let us go to the house of YHVH!* (Psalms 122:1).[184] But this is the site of the house of Judgment, from two supernal aspects: from the aspect of Jubilee, Living *Elohim*, and from the aspect of Isaac."[185]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Even though judgments arouse from Jubilee—all kinds of compassion and judgment[186]—all freedom issues from Her,[187] joy of all! Rather, *house of Elohim*—aspect of severe Judgment.[188] If for good, from the side of the left love arouses, as is said: *His left hand beneath my head* (Song of Songs 2:6).[189] If for evil, from the side of the left severe Judgment arouses, as is said: *From the north evil will be let loose on all the inhabitants of the land* (Jeremiah 1:14).[190] *House of Elohim*, indeed!"

Rabbi Shim’on said, “*House of Elohim*, corresponding to what is written: *city of the great king* (Psalms 48:3). There is a king, and then there is a king! Certainly the supernal world is a *great king*, and this is called *city of the great king*.”[191]

Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Ḥizkiyah were sitting under trees in the field of Ono.[192] Rabbi Ḥiyya fell asleep and saw Elijah.[193] He said to him,[194] “From my lord’s luster[195] the field glows!”

He said,[196] “Now I have come to announce that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed[197] along with all the towns of the sages; for Jerusalem is judgment, is based upon judgment, and is destroyed because of judgment.[198] Samael has already been empowered over her and over the mighty of the world.[199] So I have come to inform the sages—perhaps they can prolong the life of Jerusalem! For as long as Torah is found within her, she endures, since Torah is the Tree of Life, standing over her.[200] As long as Torah is aroused below,[201] the Tree of Life does not depart above. If Torah ceases below, the Tree of Life withdraws from her.[202] So as long as sages delight in Torah, Samael cannot prevail against her, for look what is written: *The voice is the voice of Jacob* (Genesis 27:22). *The voice*—supernal Torah, called *voice of Jacob*. As long as this voice does not cease, speech reigns and prevails; so Torah below must never cease.”[203]

Rabbi Ḥiyya awoke, [151b] and he went and told this word to the sages.

Rabbi Yeisa said, “Everyone knows this, and so it is written: *Unless YHVH watches over the city* (Psalms 127:1)—those engaged in Torah,[204] by virtue of whom the Holy City[205] endures, not by the mightiest men in the world.[206] So, *unless YHVH watches over the city, the watchman guards in vain* (ibid.).”

He looked, and here: a well in the field, and there were three flocks of sheep lying beside it (Genesis 29:2).[207]

Rabbi Yehudah opened, *"A psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom* (Psalms 3:1). The Companions have been aroused by this verse, but *a psalm of David*—why did he utter a song? If it was because his own son rose up against him, then he should have wailed a lamentation, since a little from one's own hurts more than a lot from another.[208] Yet, *a psalm of David*—he uttered a song, intentionally. First, because he thought that the blessed Holy One had deferred his sin to that world;[209] so as soon as he saw that He wanted to collect His due from him here, he rejoiced.[210] Further, he saw that some in the world who were greater than he had fled, all of them alone. Jacob fled, as is written: *Jacob fled to the land of Aram* (Hosea 12:13), fleeing alone. Moses fled, as is written: *Moses fled from Pharaoh's presence* (Exodus 2:15), fleeing alone.[211] But when David fled, all those rulers of the earth, all the mighty of the earth, and chiefs of Israel fled along with him—surrounding him on the right and on the left, guarding him in every direction.[212] Seeing such honor, he uttered song."

Rabbi Yehudah continued, "They all encountered this well.[213] Why not David? Because at that time it was hostile toward David, so he didn't encounter it.[214] Jacob and Moses were welcomed joyously by this well, who was eager to approach them; as soon as it saw them, water rose toward them, like a woman delighting with her husband.[215]

"Now, you might say 'Look, Elijah fled and didn't encounter it![216] Why not?' Because Elijah was below the well, not above, as were Moses and Jacob. So he is an angel, carrying out missions,[217] whereas since Jacob and Moses are above the well, the well delights in them—rising toward them like a woman delighting in her husband, receiving him.

"*He looked, and here: a well in the field*. A mystery, for he saw this well above, one corresponding to the other.[218]

"It is written: *three flocks of sheep lying beside it*. If there were [152a] three, why is it written: *All the flocks were gathered there* (Genesis, ibid., 3)?[219] Because these three are south, east, and north: south from this side, north from that side, east between them.[220] These stand beside this well, embracing it, filling it.[221] Why? *For from that well the flocks were watered*. (ibid., 2), corresponding to what is written: *watering all beasts of the field* (Psalms 104:11).[222]

"*All the flocks were gathered there*, corresponding to what is written: *All the streams flow into the sea* (Ecclesiastes 1:7).[223]

"*They would roll the stone off the mouth of the well* (Genesis, ibid., 3),[224] removing from Her the rigor of severe Judgment, which congeals and freezes water—then called *stone*, no water issuing forth.[225] When those streams issue, south is invigorated, and north cannot congeal the water[226] —just like a river: when its waters abound they do not congeal or freeze as does a river whose water is meager. So when those streams issue, south, on the right, is invigorated; water is released, flows, and waters the flocks —as we have said, for it is written: *watering all beasts of the field*.

"*Then they would put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well* (Genesis, ibid., 3), for the world needs Her judgment, manifesting judgment to reprove sinners.[227]

"Come and see: When he sat by the well[228] and saw water rising toward him, he knew that right there he would encounter his wife. Similarly, when Moses sat by the well and saw water rising toward him, he knew he would encounter his wife there. So it happened to Jacob—his wife appearing there—as is written: *While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came. When Jacob saw Rachel…* (ibid., 9–10).[229] Of Moses is written: *The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses rose up and saved them* (Exodus

2:17),[230] and there Zipporah appeared.[231] [152b] That well brought this about for them.[232]

"Come and see: This well is inscribed seven times in this section, alluding to Seven, and so it is called באר שבע (*Be'er Sheva*), Well of Seven,[233] a well mentioned seven times in the section, as is written: *He looked, and here: a well in the field* (Genesis 29:2); *for from that well* (ibid.); *and the stone on the mouth of the well was large* (ibid.); *they would roll the stone off the mouth of the well* (ibid., 3); *and they would put the stone back on the mouth of the well* (ibid.); *until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone off the mouth of the well* (ibid., 8); *he rolled the stone off the mouth of the well* (ibid., 10). See, seven! Certainly so!

"Concerning Moses, though, it is inscribed only once,[234] as is written: *He settled in the land of Midian, and he sat upon the well* (Exodus, ibid., 15); for Moses separated himself completely from the house below,[235] while Jacob did not separate at all.[236] Of Moses, one, as is written: *One is my dove, my perfect one, only one of her mother* (Song of Songs 6:9).[237] So Moses was master of the house, ascending on high.[238] Of Moses is written: *He sat upon the well*. Of Jacob is written: *He looked, and here: a well in the field*, and not: *He sat upon the well*."[239]

Alternatively, *Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran*. Rabbi Abba opened, "*Happy are those who preserve justice, who perform righteousness all the time* (Psalms 106:3). *Happy are those who preserve justice*—Happy are Israel, to whom the blessed Holy One has given Torah of truth, in which to engage day and night! Because whoever engages in Torah gains total freedom—freedom from death, which has no power over him, as has been established.[240] For whoever engages in Torah, grasping her, grasps the Tree of Life,[241] and if he lets go of the Tree of Life, the Tree of Death[242] looms over him and grasps him, as is written: *If you slacken in the day of adversity, how narrow is your*

strength! (Proverbs 24:10). *If you slacken*—losing your grip on Torah—*in the day of adversity* צר כחכה (*tsar koḥekha*), *how narrow is your strength!*[243] What does *tsar koḥekha* mean? כה צר בח (*Tsar koaḥ koh*), *The strength of koh is narrow*.[244] For it is always on the right, guarding a person constantly when he follows paths of Torah, thrusting evil aside, preventing it from approaching him or accusing him. But when a person strays from paths of Torah, letting go of her, then *the strength of koh is narrow* because evil, the left, dominates the person, thrusting *koh* aside, until its space is painfully constricted.[245]

"Alternatively, *tsar koḥekha*: when that person grasps Torah, he is loved above, loved below,[246] beloved of the blessed Holy One, as is said: *YHVH loved him* (2 Samuel 12:24)[247]—for he is the beloved of the blessed Holy One, who loves him. But when one strays from paths of Torah, then *the strength of koh is tsar*, his 'adversary,' hostile toward him,[248] and that one called Evil dominates him,[249] eventually accusing him in this world and in the world that is coming.

"Come and see: This evil one, the evil impulse, dominates the world on several flanks. How much power he wields in the world! He is the mighty serpent through whom Adam sinned, and human beings stumble over him, drawing him to themselves until he draws out the soul.

"Come and see: When he prevails, he prevails over the body.[250] As soon as he does, the soul immediately departs, since the body is defiled—so the soul ascends. He does not prevail before obtaining authorization.[251] How many issue from his side, dominating the world! We have learned that they control all events of the world; he has deputies and ministers, all in charge of worldly events.[252]

"So he is End of the Left, as has been established. For there is an end on the right and an end on the left,[253] and this End of the Left is End of all flesh—called End of all flesh, not End of all spirit.[254] Mystery of the matter: This

one is End of all flesh, that one is End of all spirit; this end presiding over flesh, that one over spirit. So this one is inner, that one outer; this one right, that one left; this one holy, that one defiled—as already established.

"Come and see a supernal, sacred mystery of faith—mystery of world of male and world of female.[255] All holiest of holies, all mysteries of faith issue from here. All life, all freedom, all goodness, all [153a] radiance from here; all blessings, bountiful dew,[256] passionate love—all from this side, mystery of the south.[257]

"From the side of the north,[258] rungs extend below until reaching below—scoria[259] of gold on the impure side, defiling filth, linked to this above, linked below.[260] Here male and female couple as one: rider, serpent, mystery of male and female.[261] This mystery is Azazel.[262]

"From here rungs branch out—countless aspects issuing into the world, spreading from here, controlling the world—all of them aspects of defilement, princes appointed throughout the world.

"Come and see: When Esau issued into the world, he issued completely red as a rose, hairy as a goat[263]—root of empowered, shield-bearing chieftains ruling the world, as already established.[264]

"Come and see: *Happy are those who preserve justice*, preserving faith in the blessed Holy One, for the blessed Holy One is *justice*.[265] One should be vigilant not to deviate to another way,[266] but rather to *preserve justice*, since the blessed Holy One is *justice* and all His ways *justice*.[267]

"*Who perform* צדקה (*tsedaqah*), *righteousness, all the time*. Now, can a person *perform tsedaqah, charity, all the time*?[268] Rather, this refers to one who strives to follow ways of Torah and performs *tsedaqah* with those in need; for whoever performs *tsedaqah* with a poor person, that act extends above and below.

"Come and see: Whenever one engages in *tsedaqah*, that act ascends on high, reaching beyond, beyond to the site of

Jacob, supernal chariot,[269] drawing blessings to that site from the spring of all springs.[270] Through that act of *tsedaqah*, he draws blessings abundantly to all those below—to all chariots and all powers, all of whom are blessed, lavished with illumination fittingly, since all of them are called עת (*et*), *time*.[271] Thus, *who perform tsedaqah all the time*.

"Come and see: When Israel dwelled in the Holy Land, they drew blessings from above to below. When Israel left the Holy Land, they came under alien authority,[272] and blessings were withheld from the world.[273]

"Come and see: Jacob was under holy authority; as soon as he left the land, he entered alien territory.[274] Before he came under alien authority, the blessed Holy One appeared to him in a dream and he saw all that he saw; holy angels accompanied him until he sat by the well. As soon as he sat by the well, water rose toward him—as with Moses, who encountered his wife there; similarly with Jacob, who there encountered his wife. Mystery of the matter: The well only rises when it sees its link, to conjoin."[275]

Rabbi Abba continued, "All these verses contradict one another! First it is written: *Jacob left Beer-sheba and went to Haran* (Genesis 28:10). Now, Laban was living in Haran; so why did he move on from there, as is written: *Jacob lifted his feet and went to the land of the Easterners* (ibid. 29:1)?[276] How do we know that Laban dwelled in Haran? As is written: *Jacob said to them, 'My brothers, where are you from?' They said, 'We are from Haran.' He said to them, 'Do you know Laban son of Nahor?'*...(ibid., 4–5),[277] implying that he dwelled in Haran.

"Rather: Jacob thought, 'I desire to enter *Shekhinah*, for I desire to couple.[278] When Father married he sent a servant who found a spring of water, where he encountered a wife for Father.[279] But in this place I haven't found a spring or a well or any water!' Immediately, *Jacob lifted his feet and*

went to the land of the Easterners, where he encountered a well, as we have said, and encountered his wife."

Rabbi El'azar said, "Haran was right there, and this well was in the field;[280] for otherwise why is it written: *She ran and told her father* (ibid., 12)?[281] Because it was near the city."

Rabbi El'azar continued, "If Jacob encountered a wife at the well, why didn't he encounter Leah, since she engendered all those tribes?[282] Because the blessed Holy One did not want to couple Leah with Jacob openly, as is written: *In the morning, here, she was Leah!* (ibid., 25)—until then it was not revealed.[283]

"Further, in order to draw Jacob's heart to the beauty of Rachel, to establish his dwelling there, as a result of which [153b] Leah coupled with him, raising all those tribes.[284]

"How did Jacob know who Rachel was? Those shepherds told him: *Here comes Rachel his daughter with the sheep* (ibid., 6).[285]

"Come and see what is written: *Jacob said to Laban, 'I will serve you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter'* (ibid., 18).[286] Now, what did Jacob have in mind? Why did he specify *seven years*, and not ten months or one year? In truth, Jacob acted in wisdom—and so that people wouldn't claim that he had acted out of lust for Rachel's beauty, but rather out of wisdom—since the moon is seven years old,[287] and all those seven supernal years alighted upon Jacob before he married Rachel, so that he would approach her fittingly.[288] First Jacob absorbed them all, then approached her—so that he would be Heaven, and she, Earth.[289]

"Mystery of the word, as is written: *They seemed to him like only* ימים אחדים (*yamim aḥadim*), *a few days* (ibid., 20).[290] What does *yamim aḥadim* mean? All those seven years seemed to him equivalent to those supernal ones—*aḥadim*, united—inseparable, all one, linked to one another.[291]

"*Because of his love for her*—corresponding to the supernal pattern.[292]

"Come and see that even Laban hinted at those seven, without knowing what he was saying, for he opened by saying טוב (*tov*), *good*, as is written: *Tov, Better, that I give her to you* (ibid., 19)."[293]

Rabbi Abba said, "Certainly so! He served seven years to couple with Sabbatical."[294]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Come and see: Jubilee is universally concealed, unrevealed, while Sabbatical is revealed.[295]

"Come and see: When Jacob had served the first seven years,[296] a voice issued, saying: 'Jacob, it is written: *from world to world* (Psalms 106:48). The *world* above: Jubilee—there, beginning. Those which are concealed, not revealed to you, stem from Jubilee.' So they were concealed from Jacob, who didn't perceive them, thinking they stemmed from Sabbatical. In order for him to make a beginning from the world above, they were hidden from him, for Jubilee is concealed.[297] Then after hidden years of Jubilee had passed, he served revealed years of Sabbatical—and was crowned with two worlds, embracing both.[298]

"Come and see: Leah gave birth to six sons and one daughter, fittingly so, for six directions stand above her; these six and one daughter emerge through the mystery of Jubilee.[299] Rachel gave birth to two righteous ones, fittingly so, for Sabbatical dwells constantly between two righteous ones, as is written: *The righteous will inherit the land* (ibid. 37:29)—Righteous One above, righteous one below.[300] From Righteous One above, She obtains supernal water;[301] from righteous one below, female emits water toward male in consummate desire.[302] Righteous One on this side, righteous one on that side. Just as male above dwells between two females, so female below dwells between two righteous ones.[303]

"So Joseph and Benjamin are both righteous. Joseph merited becoming Righteous One above because he

guarded the sign of the covenant.[304] Benjamin is righteous one below, so that Sabbatical can be crowned between two righteous ones: Joseph the Righteous and Benjamin the Righteous.

"But was Benjamin really righteous? Yes, because all the days of his life he did not sin with this sign of the covenant[305]—although an incident like Joseph's never befell him.

"If so, why is he called Righteous?[306] Because the whole time Jacob was mourning over Joseph, he did not perform in bed.[307]

"Now, you might say, 'When Joseph was snatched from Jacob, he was just a child, unmarried; yet you say he did not perform in bed?!'[308] However, even though he later coupled, he did not want to perform in bed.

"We have learned as follows: When Joseph asked Benjamin, 'Do you have a wife?' he answered, 'Yes, but children still lie in my future. How will I name them? For my brother: *Gera and Na'aman*...(ibid. 46:21).'[309] Because at that time he had none. Now, if you say, *'The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher...'* (ibid.)[310]—when they entered Egypt it was certainly so,[311] for as long as Jacob mourned over Joseph, he did not perform in bed, while later he did, engendering children.[312] Rather, Benjamin thought, 'Look, my brother Joseph constituted the covenantal sign of my father, because covenant is consummation of the body.[313] Since he has vanished, I will guard [154a] my brother's site.'[314]

"Now, you might say, 'Well, when he vanished he was not righteous—not until that incident befell him.'[315] However, they all knew from Jacob, since Jacob knew that Joseph had inherited this site.[316] That is why he prolonged his stay with Laban until the body had been consummated. Who is consummation of the body? Covenant. So it is written: *When Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, 'Send me on my way so I can go to my place* (ibid.

30:25) because the body has truly been completed, and since it has, I want to go.'[317]

"So Benjamin knew and guarded his brother's site. Once Joseph was discovered,[318] Benjamin returned to his wife and engendered children. Therefore the blessed Holy One established him as a righteous one below and Joseph righteous above.

"So Rachel gave birth to two sons, and Leah six sons and a daughter. Therefore those first years were concealed—Jacob didn't perceive them since they belonged to Jubilee[319]—while those belonging to Sabbatical were revealed.[320] For Sabbatical, revealed, he served Jubilee, concealed,[321] as is written: *Jacob served seven years for Rachel* (ibid. 29:20)—*seven years*, unidentified: *for Rachel* he served seven supernal years, embracing two worlds.[322] From here we learn that through revealed, one reaches concealed.

"Now, you might say, 'If so—that the first years derive from Jubilee—well, concerning Jubilee it is written: *seven times seven years* (Leviticus 25:8). *Seven years* appear, but where are *seven times*?'[323]

"The answer is: those seven days on which he celebrated his wedding with Leah completed the count;[324] for each day is called one *time*, as is written: *Seven times a day I praise You* (Psalms 119:164). Each of the *seven* was completed by seven days—seven each day, each of which is called one *time*. But with Rachel it was not so, for he didn't celebrate seven days, only the seven years he served later.[325]

"Now, you might say, 'If so, he should have served the years of Sabbatical first, and then coupled with Her.'[326] However, since he committed himself to serve, it was as if he had done so."

Rabbi Abba came and kissed him, saying, "Blessed is the Compassionate One for enabling me to attain this verse! Of that site is written: *YHVH desires, for the sake of His*

righteousness, to expand and glorify Torah (Isaiah 42:21)."[327]

Rabbi El'azar continued, "What has been said about Leah giving birth to six sons and one daughter is certainly so; Rachel, two sons, certainly so. But as to the four sons of the maids, how are they arrayed?[328] These constitute the four joints called *hinder parts*, as is written: *their hinder parts all inward* (1 Kings 7:25).[329] For there are three joints in the right arm, but the one in the middle is large, facing backwards, left outside.[330] Similarly, one in the left arm, one in the right leg, one in the left leg.[331] When all is aligned,[332] they all turn inward, fulfilling what is written: *their hinder parts all inward*. All the other joints line up straight, while these protrude outside the arms, outside the legs, demonstrating that the sons of the maids—although part of the count—are not considered equal to the sons of Rachel and Leah, and therefore they protrude.

"Alternatively, by these four all other joints move, moved by these."

Rabbi Abba said, "Each differs from the other, so all is arrayed as one."[333]

YHVH saw that Leah was hated and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren (Genesis 29:31).

Rabbi El'azar opened, "*He settles* הבית עקרת (*aqeret ha-bayit*), *the barren woman in her home, as a joyous mother of children* (Psalms 113:9). *He settles aqeret ha-bayit*—Rachel, עקרא דביתא (*iqqara de-veita*), essence of the house.[334] *As a joyous mother of children*—Leah.

"*He settles aqeret ha-bayit*—Sabbatical, essence of this world, by whom it is conducted.[335] *As a joyous mother of children*—Jubilee, on whom depend all freedom and joy of all worlds.[336]

“This verse is totality of all, encompassing all in holy mystery; so the verse concludes: *Hallelujah!*[337]

“*YHVH saw that Leah was hated*. Why was she hated? After all, children of a hated woman are unvirtuous,[338] while obviously all those issuing from Leah were virtuous. So how can you say *that Leah was hated?* But truly, Jubilee is always a concealed world, none of whose matters [154b] are revealed; so all its actions were concealed from Jacob.[339]

“Come and see: Lower world is revealed, beginning of all, to climb its rungs.[340] As supernal Wisdom is beginning of all, so too this lower world is Wisdom, beginning of all.[341] So we call it אתה (*Attah*), You, since it is Sabbatical, revealed;[342] higher world, Jubilee, we call הוא (*Hu*), He, since all its matters are concealed.[343] Mystery of the matter: Leah, as is written: *He lay with her in the night*, הוא (*Hu*), *He* (Genesis 30:16).[344] Therefore it is written: *The Levite will serve Hu, He* (Numbers 18:23), drawing from Him blessings for all.[345] *Hu*—supernal world, constantly concealed. Jacob, aspiring, did not cleave to the concealed, rather to the revealed. This is the mystery: *He cleaves to his wife* (Genesis 2:24).[346]

“*That Leah was hated*. From here we learn that a man hates incest with his mother or his sister, and may remain alone with his mother anywhere unconcernedly.[347] All was concealed from Jacob, for the higher world is completely unrevealed.

“Come and see: The world exists only for the sake of Jacob.[348] Now, you might say, ‘Look! For the sake of Abraham, as is written: *These are the generations of heaven and earth* בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created* (Genesis 2:4). Do not read בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created*, but rather באברהם (*be-Avraham*), through Abraham.’[349] However, even Abraham endured only for the sake of Jacob, as is written: *Thus says YHVH to*

the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham (Isaiah 29:22).[350]

"Previously the blessed Holy One built worlds and destroyed them.[351] Once Jacob arrived, upon him worlds were founded, not demolished as before, as is written: *Thus says YHVH, your Creator, Jacob; your Former, Israel* (ibid. 43:1).[352]

"Come and see what is written: *My son, My firstborn, is Israel;* and similarly: *Let My son go, so he may serve Me* (Exodus 4:22–23). Israel is called 'son of the blessed Holy One' because he cleaves to Him, as is said: *What is his name? What is his son's name?* (Proverbs 30:4).[353]

"When Leah gave birth, what is written? *She named him* ראובן (*Re'uven*), *Reuben* (Genesis 29:32): ראו בן (*Re'u ven*), *See, a son!*—nameless, merging in three sides conjoined as one.[354] Simeon and Levi. Why לוי (*Levi*), Levi? As is said: *as one joined* ולויות (*ve-loyot*), *with his companion* (1 Kings 7:36), juncture of all sides."[355]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "From here, as is written: *surpassing in dignity, surpassing in power!* (Genesis 49:3), according to its translation: 'birthright, priesthood, and kingdom,' and kingdom belongs to the side of *Gevurah*.[356] Therefore, *Re'u ven, See, a son!*—nameless."

Rabbi Abba said, "*Re'u ven, See, a son!*—a nameless son, merging with Simeon and Levi. Leah thought so, as is written: *This time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons* (ibid. 29:34)—three joined as one.[357]

"Come and see it is so, for the supernal chariot comprises the patriarchs together with King David, joined with them.[358] All four constitute the supernal chariot, mystery of the holy name.[359] So: Reuben, Simeon, Levi; subsequently Judah, who inherited kingdom.[360] So one follows the other, and it is written: *This time I will praise YHVH…* (ibid., 35).[361]

“*Then she stopped giving birth* (ibid.), for here four supports were established.

“*This time I will praise YHVH*. Why did she say *I will praise YHVH* concerning this one and not all the others? From here we learn that as long [155a] as Assembly of Israel is in exile, the Holy Name is incomplete.[362]

“Come and see: Although there were three sons, the throne was incomplete until she gave birth to Judah. Therefore, This *time I will praise YHVH*, not for all the others. So ותעמוד (*va-ta’amod*), *she stopped, giving birth*. Why *va-ta’amod, she stood?*[363] Because the throne stood on its supports. *Va-ta’amod, She stood*, for until here She stands in unity; from here below is the World of Division.[364]

“Now, you might say, ‘Similarly with those two sons she bore afterward.’[365] Not so! For those two joined with these, since six directions of the world are as one.[366]

“Come and see: All those twelve tribes constitute the adornment of Assembly of Israel in this world, arraying the black light[367] fittingly, restoring the essence of all to its site.[368] All those worlds assume the same pattern, so lower world is consummated like higher.[369]

“Issachar, Zebulun. Here six sons were consummated, six directions of the world. Sons of the maids are four, conjoined with these, four links joining them, as has been established. So it is written: *their hinder parts all inward* (1 Kings 7:25)—although they are sons of the maids, *inward*.”[370]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, “If so, it has been said that everything engendered by the lower world is division, since it is written: *from there it divides* (Genesis 2:10).[371] So what do you say about Joseph and Benjamin? If you claim that they resemble the unified world, not so! For they did not issue from the higher world, and whatever the lower world engendered, it engendered below, not above. If so, it is division.”[372]

Rabbi Abba came and kissed him.[373] He said, “This matter is concealed, for the higher world is arrayed in twelve of its own.[374] But come and see mystery of the matter: From the lower world, Righteous One perpetually emerges and enters—entering there, emerging from there. So He is erected in this site—rooted above, rooted below—constantly, forever in the lower world.[375] [155b]

“It is written: *As her soul departed—for she was dying…* (ibid. 35:18).[376] Come and see: Into this lower world, Righteous One enters; from it He emerges—entering in the mystery of Joseph the Righteous, emerging in the mystery of Benjamin,[377] as is written: *as her soul departed*. Who is *her soul*? Righteous one, emerging from Her: Benjamin. *She named him* בן אוני (*Ben Oni*), Son of My Sorrow, thinking she had given birth below in the World of Division, leaving eleven above.[378] What is written? *But his father called him* בנימין (*Binyamin*), *Benjamin*—בן ימין (*Ben Yamin*), Son of the Right, for he ascended above to the higher world, because when Joseph disappeared Benjamin filled his place.[379]

“So Righteous One enters the lower world and emerges. Therefore Joseph, Benjamin, and all those twelve correspond to the pattern above, in undivided unity.”

This time I will praise YHVH.

Rabbi Shim’on opened, “*I will praise YHVH with all my* לבב (*levav*), *heart, in the council of the upright and the assembly* (Psalms 111:1). *With all my levav, heart*. The verse should read: *with all my* לב (*lev*), *heart*.[380] But David sought to praise the blessed Holy One in the supernal mystery of the holy name. *I will praise YHVH with all my levav*, with the good impulse and the evil impulse—two sides, one on the right and one on the left.[381]

“*In the council of the upright*—the other directions of this world.[382] For *levav* corresponds to south and north;[383] *in the council of the upright*—the other directions

of the world, corresponding above; ועדה (*ve-edah*), *and the assembly*—site of יהודה (*Yehudah*), Judah, as is written: ועדותי (*ve-edoti*), *My testimony, that I will teach them* (ibid. 132:12), and similarly: *Judah* עוד (*od*), *still, rules with God* (Hosea 12:1).[384]

"Yet it is written: *I will praise You with all* לבי (*libbi*), *my heart; before Elohim I will sing to You* (Psalms 138:1), referring here to a single site, as is written: *before Elohim I will sing to You*, for he proclaimed song to this rung, to unite Her with the right.[385]

"Come and see: Judah embraces all sides, embracing south, embracing east.[386] For he derives from the left side, originating from the north,[387] and he embraces south since he moves to the right, linking with the body.[388] So, *This time I will praise YHVH*.[389]

"ותעמוד (*Va-ta'amod*), *She stopped, giving birth*. *Va-ta'amod*, *She stood*—standing firm, standing fittingly, the entire holy chariot arranged."[390]

Rabbi Shim'on went out to the villages.[391] He encountered Rabbi Abba, Rabbi Ḥiyya, and Rabbi Yose. Upon seeing them, he declared, "Innovations of Torah are required here!"[392]

They sat for three days.[393] As they were about to leave, each one opened with a verse.

Rabbi Abba opened, saying, "*YHVH said to Abram, after Lot had parted from him, 'Raise your eyes now and look from the place where you are, to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west. For all the land that you see I will give to you'* (Genesis 13:14–15). Now, did Abraham inherit the land according to his range of vision and no further? How far can a human see? Three parasangs, or four or five.[394] And He said, *For all the land that you see*! However, since he saw in four directions of the world, he saw the whole world, for four directions of the world encompass the whole world.

“Further, the blessed Holy One lifted the land of Israel [156a] and showed him how it was bound to the directions of the world, so he saw everything.[395]

“Similarly, whoever sees Rabbi Shim’on sees the whole world, delight of above and below!”[396]

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, saying, “*The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your seed* (ibid. 28:13).[397] Now, did the blessed Holy One promise him only that spot? Look, it was no more than four cubits![398] However, within those four cubits the blessed Holy One rolled up the whole land of Israel,[399] so that spot comprised the whole land.

“Now, if that spot comprised the whole land, how much more so Rabbi Shim’on, Lamp of the whole world!”[400]

Rabbi Yose opened, saying, “*This time I will praise* YHVH (ibid. 29:35).[401] Now, among all those whom she bore, was it fitting to praise the blessed Holy One only for this one? However, Judah is the fourth son of the Throne, consummating the Throne.[402] So Judah alone is perfection of the Throne, bolstering all its supports. “How much more so Rabbi Shim’on, who illumines the whole world with Torah, causing countless lamps to glow!”

In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field (ibid. 30:14).

Rabbi Yitsḥak opened, “*O YHVH, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures* (Psalms 104:24). This verse has been established in numerous places,[403] but who can enumerate the works of the blessed Holy One? For He created so many forces and camps,[404] each differing from the other, and all simultaneously[405]—like a hammer scattering sparks within sparks simultaneously in every direction.[406] So the blessed

Holy One generated so many species and camps, one differing from the other, countless, all simultaneously.

"Come and see: By speech and spirit as one, all was fashioned, as is written: *By the word of YHVH the heavens were made, by the breath of His mouth all their host* (Psalms 33:6). *By the word of YHVH*—Speech; *by the breath of His mouth*—Spirit.[407] One does not proceed without the other.[408] One merged with the other, and from them emerged hosts upon hosts, camps upon camps, all simultaneously.

"Come and see: When the blessed Holy One wished to create worlds He generated a single concealed light, from which radiate all those revealed lights.[409] From that light issued other lights, forming, spreading, becoming the higher world.[410]

"This supernal light extended further, fashioning an artisan, a light that does not shine, fashioning the lower world.[411] Being a light that does not shine, it yearns to join above [156b] and yearns to join below, and by joining below, it joins illuminatingly the juncture above.[412] This light that does not shine, through joining above, generated all forces and camps of many kinds, as is written: *O YHVH, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures*.[413]

"Everything on earth corresponds above.[414] Even the tiniest thing in this world depends upon another, supernal thing appointed over it.[415] For when this one below is aroused, the one appointed above it is aroused, since all is interlinked.[416]

"Come and see what is written: *Give me some of your son's mandrakes!* (Genesis, ibid.).[417] It wasn't the mandrakes that caused Rachel to give birth; rather, the blessed Holy One brought this about by means of those mandrakes, so that Issachar would issue, embracing Torah more firmly than all those tribes.[418] For Rachel embraced Jacob and wouldn't let him go to Leah, as is written: *Is your*

taking my husband a small thing? and: *Then he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes* (ibid., 15).[419] These ushered Issachar into the world, who wafted fragrance of Torah into the presence of the blessed Holy One, as is written: *The mandrakes give forth fragrance* (Song of Songs 7:14). It is also written: *He lay with her in the night*, הוּא (*Hu*), *He* (Genesis 30:16)—*Hu*, precisely, as has been established: it was the supernal world, concealed, unrevealed.[420] For look, Torah emerged from the supernal world,[421] universally *Hu*, and Issachar was linked to it.[422] So we call it Tree of Life[423]—tree of that supernal life called *Hu*, He, not אַתָּה (*Attah*), You.[424]

"Now, if you say these mandrakes opened Rachel's womb, not so! For it is written: *God listened to her and opened her womb* (ibid., 22)—the blessed Holy One and nothing else. Because although these mandrakes possess supernal power, that power does not extend to engendering children. After all, children depend on the flux of destiny[425] and on no other power.

"Now, if you say they were created in vain, not so! For even [157a] in this matter[426] they help, for those hindered yet not barren, not doomed by destiny.

"*Leah went out to meet him and said, 'You are to come to me, for I have surely hired you'* (ibid., 16).[427] This statement is impudent, so it seems, but not really so.[428] Rather, from here we learn of Leah's modesty; for she did not speak in the presence of her sister, but instead she set out and told him secretly, informing him that he belonged to Rachel, as is written: *for I have surely hired you*—'I have obtained permission from Rachel.' To prevent Rachel's distress, she told him outside, not in the house.

"Further, the opening of Leah's tent faced the road, and she brought Jacob in through this opening before he could enter Rachel's tent. Why? So she wouldn't say a word in Rachel's presence, speaking impudently before her sister.

“Further, Leah thought, ‘If Jacob enters Rachel’s tent, it would not be right to take him out.’ So she intercepted him outside.

“Why all this? Because Holy Spirit roused within her,[429] and she knew that all these supernal tribes, all holy, would issue from her. So out of love for the blessed Holy One she acted impulsively, assigning them names in the mystery of wisdom.”[430]

Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Yose were walking on the way. Rabbi Yose said to Rabbi Ḥiyya, “Whenever we are on the road, the blessed Holy One performs miracles for us. Since we now have a long road ahead of us, let us engage in Torah, so the blessed Holy One will couple with us.”[431]

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, saying, “*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, you shall eat unleavened bread* (Exodus 12:18).[432] And it is written: *Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread*, לחם עוני (*leḥem oni*), *bread of affliction* (Deuteronomy 16:3)[433]—spelled לחם עני (*leḥem ani*), *impoverished bread*. The Companions have already been aroused by this word,[434] but come and see: When Israel were in Egypt, they were under alien authority.[435] When the blessed Holy One desired to bring them close to Him, He gave them the realm of *leḥem ani*, *impoverished bread*. Who is *impoverished*? King David, of whom is written: *For I am impoverished and needy* (Psalms 86:1).[436] This *impoverished bread* is called מצה (*matstsah*), unleavened bread; female without male is poor.[437] First they approached *matstsah*.[438] When they drew closer, the blessed Holy One conducted them onto other rungs,[439] and male united with female. Then מצה (*matstsah*)—uniting with male—was called מצוה (*mitsvah*), commandment, supplemented with ו (*vav*),[440] as is written: *For* המצוה הזאת (*ha-mitsvah ha-zot*), *this commandment* (Deuteronomy 30:11).[441] So first מצה (*matstsah*), then מצוה (*mitsvah*).”

As they were walking, they heard a voice: “Armed band of cutthroats[442] waylaying crookedly! Veer above! Do not descend to an unroofed fortress[443] below!”

Rabbi Yose said, “Conclude from this that the blessed Holy One wants to guard our way!”

They climbed up into the mountains, between towering cliffs. They said, “Since the blessed Holy One favors this way, we will witness something or a miracle is about to happen.”

They walked on, then sat down by crevices in the rock. A man climbed out; they were astounded. Rabbi Yose said, “Who are you?”

He replied, “I am one of the denizens of Arqa.”[444]

He asked, “Human beings live there?”

“Yes,” he replied. “They sow and harvest. Some of them look different, stranger than me.[445] I came up to you to discover the name of the earth you inhabit.”

He said, “ארץ (*Erets*), Earth,[446] for here dwells ארץ החיים (*Erets ha-Ḥayyim*), Land of Life,[447] as is written: *Erets, Earth, from which bread emerges* (Job 28:5)—from this one *bread emerges;* from the others, not. And if it does emerge, then not of the seven species.”[448]

Meanwhile, he entered his site. They were astonished, and said, “Surely by this the blessed Holy One wants to arouse us.”

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “Certainly so! Now, this verse that you cited reminds me of a sublime word I learned from my grandfather concerning Passover: The blessed Holy One gave Israel this bread from the Land of Life,[449] and later, bread from heaven.[450] This word we have established.

“He further said, [157b] ‘When a person issues into the world, he knows nothing until he tastes bread.[451] Upon tasting bread, he is stimulated to know and perceive. Similarly, when Israel left Egypt, they knew nothing until the blessed Holy One gave them a taste of the bread of this *earth*,[452] as is written: *Earth, from which bread emerges*. Then Israel entered into knowing and perceiving the blessed Holy One. A baby does not know or perceive until he tastes the bread of this world, whereupon he knows and perceives matters of this world. Israel did not know or perceive supernal matters until they ate supernal bread, whereupon they knew and perceived that realm.

“The blessed Holy One wanted Israel to know more of the realm befitting this *earth*,[453] but they were unable until they tasted bread from that realm. Who is that? Heaven, as is written: *I am going to rain bread from heaven for you* (Exodus 16:4).[454] Then they knew and contemplated that realm. Before eating bread from these sites, they knew and perceived nothing.”

Rabbi Yose came and kissed him, saying, “It was precisely for this that the blessed Holy One aroused us![455] So, Israel’s initiation into knowledge was bread.”

They rose and walked on. While they were walking they saw two Damascene plums, one male and one female.[456]

Rabbi Yose said, “Every single thing in the world corresponds to the pattern above, and everything above has its counterpart on earth,[457] and everything on earth has its counterpart in the sea.”[458]

He opened, saying, "*When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, 'You are to come to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes'* (Genesis 30:16). *Leah went out to meet him*. How did she know?[459] They have already explained that the donkey brayed, so Leah knew and went out toward him, bringing about the birth of Issachar, as is written: *Issachar* חמור גרם (*ḥamor garem*), *a strong-boned donkey* (ibid. 49:14). Do not read גָּרֶם (*garem*), *strong-boned*, but rather גָּרַם (*garam*), caused, for a donkey caused his birth.[460] Leah thought, 'I know for sure that once Jacob enters Rachel's tent, I cannot get him out. Rather, I'll wait here for him, so he'll enter my tent.'

"*For I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes*. Why *my son's mandrakes*?[461] So Jacob would be pleased, for these facilitate birth.[462] But Jacob knew that this matter depended not on mandrakes but rather above.[463] So he opened and said, *He settles the barren woman in her home as a joyous mother of children. Hallelujah!* (Psalms 113:9)."

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "Holy Spirit said this.[464] *He settles* עקרת הבית (*aqeret ha-bayit*), *the barren woman in her home*—Rachel. *A joyous mother of children*—Leah. *He settles aqeret ha-bayit*—lower world. *A joyous mother of children*—higher world. So, *Hallelujah!*"[465]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "All these tribes are adornments below, all corresponding above.[466] Come and see: *For I have surely hired you*—to obtain a body from him. Who is that? Torah.[467] *I have surely hired you*—you, your actual body. [158a] *I have surely hired you*—to engender your image.

"From here we learn that whoever engages in Torah inherits both the world that is coming and the inheritance of Jacob.[468] He inherits the world that is coming, as is written: יששכר, יש שכר (*Yissachar, yesh sakhar*), *Issachar*—there is reward;[469] similarly, *So I may endow those who love Me*

with יש (*yesh*), *substance, and fill their treasuries* (Proverbs 8:21)."[470]

For I have borne him six sons! (Genesis 30:20).[471] Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, "These are: above, below, and four directions of the world.[472] Whoever prolongs אחד (*eḥad*), *one*, must enthrone the blessed Holy One above, below, and in all four directions. This is *one*."[473]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, "It is written: *upon mountains of separation* (Song of Songs 2:17)[474] and also *upon mountains of spices* (ibid. 8:14). Who are *mountains of spices?* Six sons of Leah, embracing six others, totaling twelve—totaling six, each enfolded in his fellow—with Leah above them, fulfilling: *a joyous mother of children*.[475]

"So it is written: *Do not take the mother along with the young* (Deuteronomy 22:6),[476] for She is the concealed world—unrevealed; so *Let the mother go*—since She is totally unrevealed—*and the young you may take for yourself* (ibid., 7),[477] corresponding to what is written: *For ask now of primal days...from one end of heaven to the other* (Deuteronomy 4:32).[478] All these are called *mountains of spices*;[479] from here below are called *mountains of separation*, as is written: *From there it divides* (Genesis 2:10),[480] mountains of division."[481]

Rabbi Yeisa said, "Sons of the maids joined joints—joints essential for arrayal."[482]

Rabbi El'azar said, "Therefore those joints protrude, though all are one. From here on, all are one in a straight line.[483] So all those tribes ascend in testimony above, as is written: *There tribes ascend, tribes of Yah—a testimony to Israel—to praise the name of YHVH* (Psalms 122:4)."

Rabbi El'azar continued, "*When Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, 'Send me on my way, so I may*

go to my place and my land' (Genesis 30:25). What prompted Jacob to set out on his way when Joseph was born, whereas before he didn't want to? He saw, as they have established, that Esau's adversary had been born.[484]

"Come and see: Joseph completed his realm with his site, thereby attaining the title Righteous One.[485] Here, consummation of the body.[486] Once Jacob saw the body completed, he wanted to go on his way. He is consummation of the body; yet even so, Benjamin completed the count, completing twelve.[487]

"But didn't Jacob know that although Joseph had been born, the tribes were not yet completed? Why then didn't he wait until Benjamin was born, so that they would be complete? Because Jacob acted in wisdom, aware of something. He thought, 'If all those tribes are completed here, then I know supernal perfection will rest upon them fittingly—which should not happen here, only in the Holy Land.[488]

"Come see that it is so! For all those twelve tribes comprise the adornment of the lower world.[489] As soon as Benjamin was born, Rachel died, and this lower world assumed her place, to be adorned by them. Therefore Benjamin was born precisely in the Holy Land, as is written: *When I was returning from Paddan, Rachel, alas, died in the land of Canaan* (ibid. 48:7).[490] There Rachel died, and lower world assumed her place, settling in a completed house.[491] As long as Rachel endured, lower world was not adorned by them; the moment Rachel died, it possessed the house completely.

"Now, you might ask, 'Why didn't Leah die at the same time?'[492] Because the house belonged to the lower world, to whose adornment all of them pertained, not to that of the higher world. Therefore she didn't die at that time.[493]

"All of Leah's activities are concealed—because the higher world is concealed, unrevealed. Therefore Leah's death is not mentioned, unlike Rachel's.[494]

“Come and see: Since all matters of the higher world are concealed, while all those of the lower world are revealed, Leah was concealed in the Cave of Machpelah, while Rachel in revealment of the road; one secretly, one openly.[495] So all blessings partake of two worlds, revealed and concealed.[496] Yet although that has been established, this mystery is inscribed in the higher world, as is written: *Leah said*, ‘באשרי (*Be-oshri*), *Happy am I! For daughters* אשרוני (*ishsheruni*), *will deem me happy*’ (ibid. 30:13).[497] Because of Her, she named him אשר (*Asher*), *Asher*.[498] [158b] Nevertheless, all is one, for all derives from the higher world, really so! Everywhere two worlds: one revealed, one concealed. We always bless the blessed Holy One with two worlds, as is written: *Blessed be YHVH, God of Israel, from world to world* (Psalms 106:48).[499] So we call higher world הוא (*Hu*), He, and lower world אתה (*Attah*), You.[500] Since He is blessed from the higher world, He is blessed from the lower world by Righteous One, as is written: *Blessed is YHVH from Zion, dwelling in Jerusalem* (ibid. 135:21)—*blessed from Zion*, precisely![501]

“Come and see, similarly: יהוה יחוח (*YHVH, YHVH*) (Exodus 34:6)—two times, two worlds; one revealed, one concealed.[502] So they are separated by a punctuation mark,[503] yet from this world to that world all is one.”

When Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, ‘Send me on my way, so I may go to my place and my land’ (Genesis 30:25).

Rabbi Yehudah said, “Come and see the integrity of Jacob, who did not want to leave without Laban’s permission. Now, you might ask, ‘Why not the other time?’[504] Because Jacob feared that he wouldn’t let him go and twelve tribes would be completed in an alien land.[505] So as soon as he saw Benjamin’s time approaching, he fled, as is said: *He fled with all that he had* (ibid. 31:21).

For once Benjamin was born, *Shekhinah* linked Herself with all those tribes, possessing the house with them.[506] Through the spirit of wisdom, Jacob knew that as soon as twelve tribes were complete *Shekhinah* would join with them, Rachel would die, and She would take over the house.

"Come and see what we have learned: Lower world was destined for Jacob as She was for Moses,[507] but She was unable until there appeared in the house twelve tribes with whom She could join. Then Rachel was thrust aside, and She possessed the house with all those tribes,[508] becoming עקרא דביתא (*iqqara de-veita*), essence of the house. Then, *He settles* עקרת הבית (*aqeret ha-bayit*), *essence of the house* (Psalms 113:9), precisely![509]

"Jacob said, 'The time has arrived for twelve tribes to be completed. The world above[510] will certainly descend to the house, joining them, while this poor woman[511] will be pushed away before it. If she dies here, I will never escape. Furthermore, in this land it is not fitting to complete the house.'[512] So, *When Rachel had given birth to Joseph*[513]—before the tribes were complete."

When Rabbi Shim'on heard this, he said, "Certainly all words of Rabbi Yehudah are fine, but this transcends them all!

"Now, you might ask 'Why didn't he set out on his way immediately?'[514] Because as long as Rachel had not conceived Benjamin, he lingered there. As soon as Benjamin's time approached, he fled without asking permission, so as not to delay, so Jacob could join all those tribes in a suitable site."

Rabbi Abba opened, "*Moses returned to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, 'Let me return to my brothers in Egypt….' Jethro said to Moses, 'Go in peace'* (Exodus 4:18).[515] Come and see: Moses was Jethro's shepherd, residing with him; when he wanted to leave, he did so only with his permission. So why didn't Jacob, who was

perfect[516] and resided steadily with Laban, ask him permission? Because, as already explained, when he told him at first, he immediately spun schemes to make him remain there,[517] so now he feared him; whereas Jethro didn't act like that toward Moses. Furthermore, Laban was a sorcerer, all his dealings toward Jacob steeped in sorcery.[518] Now Jacob didn't want to delay, since the blessed Holy One had told him, *Return to the land of your fathers*... (Genesis 31:3).[519] So he didn't want to delay, forsaking the command of his Lord.

"Come and see what is written: *God remembered Rachel*... (ibid. 30:22)."[520]

He opened, saying, "*For the leader. Of the sons of Korah, upon* עלמות (*alamot*), *a song* (Psalms 46:1).[521] This verse should be contemplated, for it constitutes a mystery of wisdom. All these songs and praises chanted by the sons of Korah—they all renew those songs and praises of old. Similarly, all those songs and praises chanted by David and all his associates[522] were all in supernal mystery, in the spirit of wisdom.

"Come and see: The blessed Holy One fashioned the lower world corresponding to the higher world.[523] All those arrayals arrayed by David and Solomon his son and all the true prophets[524] were [159a] arrayed entirely according to the supernal pattern.[525]

"Come and see: Just as there are watches on earth, so too there are watches in heaven, as the Companions have established.[526] Arrayed watches in heaven sing to their Lord, chanting song constantly.[527] They all stand facing one another, all arranged for song and praise.

"עלמות (*Alamot*), *a song*. What is *Alamot, a song?* Corresponding to what is said: *There are sixty queens and eighty concubines*, ועלמות (*va-alamot*), *and damsels, without number* (Song of Songs 6:8).[528] What does this mean: *damsels without number!* As is said: *Is there any number to his troops?* (Job 25:3).[529] Since they are innumerable, it is

written: *damsels without number*, all rows upon rows, revolving arrays, facing one another, singing praises to their Lord. These are *alamot, damsels of, song*. Since there are *damsels* who do not sing like these, these are called *damsels of song*.

"Three arrays diverge on every side, in four directions of the world. Each and every array on every side—three other arrays.[530]

"First array, to the east,[531] is three arrays, which are nine arrays, since each of those three comprises three arrays, consequently nine, with countless thousands and myriads beneath them.

"These nine arrays are conducted by engraved letters, upon which each of them gazes.[532] They join in unison, chanting song. When those letters soar through air of spirit appointed over all, they stir,[533] and song turns fragrant.

"One letter knocks from below, ascending, descending. Two letters soar above them, and this letter below ascends, from below above, joining them, becoming three letters, all corresponding to the letters יה״ו (*yod, he, vav*),[534] three within the resplendent speculum.[535] From these, three arrays diverge. Those letters are two; this letter ascending joins them, and they are three.

"Come and see: Those two supernal letters ascending through the air interlace one another, compassion with judgment.[536] So they are two, from the supernal world in mystery of male.[537] The one ascending, joining them, is female,[538] embraced by both of them. Just as female is embraced by two sides, right and left,[539] so this letter is female and joins two other letters on two sides. These above, this below; all is one, male and female—though when the world was created, those letters derived from the supernal world,[540] engendering all works below according to their pattern precisely.[541] So whoever knows them and is mindful of them is beloved above, beloved below."[542]

Rabbi Shim’on said, “All those letters are male and female,[543] merging as one in mystery of upper waters and lower waters.[544] All is one, consummate unity. So whoever knows them and is mindful of them is beloved above and below, for this is the essence of perfect unity.

“Three, three, on this side and on that side,[545] in single unity, in total perfection. All of them mystery of supernal array, fittingly, corresponding above; for that array is three, three—in single mystery.[546]

“Second array, to the south:[547] three arrays on that side, each array three, totaling nine, as has been said. Letters divide in every direction, to all join as one, for there are letters in mystery of female and letters in mystery of male, all uniting as one, becoming one in the mystery of the complete holy name.[548] Accompanying them, appointed arrays[549]—three, three, as has been said.

“All issues from the array of supernal Patriarchs, according to the arrayal of letters of the holy name: יה״ו (*yod, he, vav*),[550] as has been said. These arrays are all conducted by these well-known letters, by which they move. Countless forces and princes, all below,[551] move and are conducted within this array.

“Third array, to the north:[552] three arrays on that side; they are nine.

“On three sides, three on each side, totaling nine. Those arrays on three sides, as has been said, twenty-seven, [159b] in the mystery of letters totaling twenty-seven. Although they are twenty-two, the full complement of letters is twenty-seven.[553] Consequently, as there are twenty-seven letters, the arrayal of these arrays is twenty-seven, three arrays on each side. Three on this side comprise nine; three on this side comprise nine; three on this side comprise nine—consequently all of them total twenty-seven.

“Mystery of these twenty-seven letters: nine letters in mystery of female, through which female joins those

eighteen others through the mystery mentioned, all fittingly.[554]

"Come and see: Corresponding to supernal letters of the higher world, similarly other letters below. High letters, large; low letters, small; all corresponding to one another.[555] In all these mysteries, through mystery of male and female, all is consummately one.

"ויזכור אלהים (*Va-yizkor Elohim*), *God remembered, Rachel,*[556] since this depends on the flux of destiny,[557] so with her זכירה (*zekhirah*), remembering, is mentioned.[558] *And YHVH attended to Sarah* (Genesis 21:1)—not from the flux of destiny.[559]

"Now, you might say, 'Look, children depend on the flux of destiny, not below![560] Wasn't that true here with Sarah?' However, it is written: ויהוה (*Va-YHVH*), *And YHVH*, all as one.[561]

"If so, why is 'attending' mentioned?[562] Because surely 'remembering' happened previously, and this key was handed below, as is written: *But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this appointed time…* (ibid. 17:21).[563] Similarly later: since 'remembering' was mentioned in mystery above, later in mystery of female 'attending' is noted, so that consummation of all will be as one."[564]

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, "*I have also heard the groaning of the Children of Israel, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered My covenant* (Exodus 6:5). *God remembered Rachel.*[565]

"ואזכור (*Va-ezkor*), *I have remembered*. Here זכירה (*zekhirah*), remembering, for this is above, since flux of destiny—above in דכורא (*dekhora*), male—conjoined with פקידה (*peqidah*), attending, in exile below in female.[566] Similarly, ויזכור אלהים (*Va-yizkor Elohim*), *God remembered, Rachel*, as is said: *Va-ezkor, I have remembered, My covenant.*[567]

"Come and see what is written: *I have surely attended to you* (ibid. 3:16).[568] *I have surely attended?* But

‘attending’ inheres in female, who at that moment was in exile, so how could She say, *I have surely attended*?[569]

“Here, however, one should contemplate; a mystery of wisdom lies here. If She was in exile, how could She manifest to Moses here?[570] How could She say, *I have surely attended?* But so we have learned: When the sun radiates, he is in heaven, while his power and energy prevail throughout earth. Similarly, *The whole earth* is *full of His presence* (Isaiah 6:3).[571] As long as the Temple stood, *the whole earth is full of His presence*—the Holy Land.[572] Now that Israel is in exile, She is above, while Her power envelops Israel, protecting them, even though they dwell in a foreign land.[573]

“Come and see: *Shekhinah* above, *Shekhinah* below.[574] *Shekhinah* above in twelve dominions, holy chariots, twelve supernal creatures.[575] *Shekhinah* below among twelve holy tribes.[576] So *Shekhinah* is encompassed above and below, all simultaneously as one—although when Israel is in exile and She is disarrayed below, She is disarrayed above as well.[577] This is exile along with Israel, for She shares with them in exile.[578]

“How is She arrayed?[579] This can be compared to a king whose son died. What did he do? In mourning for his son, he overturned his bed.[580] Rather than rearranging it, he took thorns and thistles, threw them on the bottom of his bed, and lay on it. Similarly with the blessed Holy One: when Israel went into exile and the Temple was destroyed, He took thorns and thistles, and placed them beneath Himself, as is written: *The angel of YHVH appeared to him in a flame of fire from within a bush* (Exodus 3:2), because Israel was in exile.[581]

“פקוד פקדתי (*Paqod paqadti*), *I have surely attended, to you*. If someone is outside his domain and no longer his own master,[582] how can he attend? What can he do?[583] But *paqod* from above, *paqadti* below.[584] Why? Because *zekhirah*, remembering, had rested upon Her previously, as is

written: *Va-ezkor, I have remembered, My covenant*, indicating that 'remembering' was appointed over Her. So subsequently She said, *Paqod paqadti, I have surely attended,*[585] [160a] for She had already grasped a sign.[586]

"Similarly with Sarah: ויהוה פקד (*Va-YHVH paqad*), *And YHVH attended, to Sarah* (Genesis 21:1),[587] But here—with Rachel, who had not been 'remembered' previously—'attending' is not mentioned; rather, 'remembering.'[588] All is encompassed within remembering, in the mystery of the flux of destiny."[589]

Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Ḥizkiyah were going from Cappadocia to Lydda.[590] Rabbi Yehudah was riding and Rabbi Ḥizkiyah was on foot. After a while Rabbi Yehudah dismounted and said, "From here on, let us engage in Torah,[591] as is written: הבו (*Havu*), *Render, greatness to our God!* (Deuteronomy 32:3)."[592]

He replied, "If we were three, this would be fitting, for one could speak and two could respond."[593]

He said, "This applies only to blessings, since one utters the name of the blessed Holy One, while two respond, as is written: *When I proclaim the name of YHVH, render greatness to our God! When I proclaim the name of YHVH*—the one who blesses; *render greatness to our God!*—the two others.[594] But with Torah, even two can render the potent greatness of praise of Torah to the blessed Holy One."[595]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said to him, "With blessings, why three?"

He replied, "This has already been established and explained, as is written: *Render greatness!*[596] But here is mystery of the matter, since mystery of every blessing is the same: one to bless, two to respond,[597] so that praise of the blessed Holy One may ascend in mystery of three, one blessing and two acknowledging. This is fulfillment of blessings in supernal mystery, fittingly—in mystery of three, as has been established."[598]

While they were walking, Rabbi Yehudah said, “We have learned that there is remembering for good and remembering for evil, attending for good and attending for evil.[599]

“Remembering for good—as they have established, for it is written: *I will remember for their sake the covenant with the ancients* (Leviticus 26:45); *God remembered Noah* (Genesis 8:1); *God remembered His covenant* (Exodus 2:24). Remembering for evil—as is written: *He remembered that they were flesh, a passing breath that does not return* (Psalms 78:39).

“פקידה (*Peqidah*), Attending, for good—as is written: *I have surely attended to you* (Exodus 3:16). *Peqidah* for evil—as is written: ופקדתי (*U-phaqadti*), *I will punish, their transgression with the rod* (Psalms 89:33).[600]

“All, supernal mysteries. All of these rememberings and attendings for good are well-known rungs, mystery of faith, male and female, a single mystery: remembering and attending.[601] These are for good. Remembering and attending for evil are mystery of the Other Side,[602] abiding in mystery of other gods, male and female as one: this, remembering; this, attending.[603] These are constantly poised for evil, these opposite those. From here issue all mysteries of faith—all supernal holiness—as has been established.[604] From here issue all injuries, all evil, all death, all evil aspects and species of the world, as has been established.[605] This, the converse of that.”

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, “Certainly so! Happy is one whose share is firmly rooted in the Good Side, who does not incline to the Other Side but is saved from there.”

Rabbi Yehudah replied, “Certainly so! Happy is one who can be saved from that side! Happy are the righteous who can save themselves from them and wage war against that side!”[606]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah asked, “How?”

He opened, saying,[607] “*For by stratagems you can wage war* (Proverbs 24:6). Which war? The war against that evil side, whom a human being must combat and overpower, to be delivered from him.

“Come and see how Jacob strove with Esau on account of his side,[608] outsmarting him, dealing with him as tortuously as necessary,[609] in order to overpower him in the beginning and at the end, all fittingly. Beginning and end in a single pattern, as is written: בכרתי (*bekhorati*), *my birthright*, and later ברכתי (*birkhati*), *my blessing* (Genesis 27:36)[610]—beginning and end as one, corresponding to one another, to prevail against him precisely, befittingly.[611] So, happy is one who saves himself from him and is able to overpower him!

“Come and see: Remembering and attending for good are as one, mystery of faith. Happy is one who strives after faith, as is said: *They will follow YHVH, roaring like a lion* (Hosea 11:10).”[612]

Rabbi Ḥizkiyah said, “Certainly so! Come and see: When a person prays, he should not exclaim: ‘Remember me! Attend to me!’ Because there is ‘remembering and attending for good,’ and ‘remembering and attending [160b] for evil,’ who are poised to snatch the word from his mouth and proceed to recite his sins and punish him—unless he is perfectly righteous, so when ‘remembering and attending for evil’ search for his sins they won’t find them, as with Ezra who said: *Remember me, O my God, for good!* (Nehemiah 5:19).[613]

“Wherever a person prays, he should merge in multitude, totality of multitude.[614] Come and see from the Shunammite,[615] when Elisha asked her, *Can we speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?* (2 Kings 4:13). *Can we speak on your behalf to the king?* That day was Rosh Hashanah[616]—the day Kingdom of Heaven reigns, judging the world, the time the blessed Holy One is called King.[617] So he asked her, *Can we speak on your behalf to the king?*

“What is written? *She replied, ‘I dwell among my own people’* (ibid.). What was she saying? ‘I don’t want to be designated above, but rather to include myself in the multitude and not exclude myself from their entirety.’ Similarly, one should merge in totality of multitude and not isolate himself—so they won’t notice him, reciting his sins, as we have said.”[618]

Rabbi Yehudah opened, saying, “*Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Have you seen the gates of deep darkness?* (Job 38:17). This verse was spoken by the blessed Holy One to Job when He saw Job tormenting himself over divine justice.

“Come and see: Job said, ‘*He will slay me*, לא איחל (*lo ayaḥel*)’ (ibid. 13:15)—written לא (*lo*), *no*, with an א (*alef*); read לו (*lo*), *in Him*, with a ו (*vav*), encompassing all.[619]

“The blessed Holy One replied, ‘Am I the one who kills human beings? *Have the gates of death been revealed to you?* So many gates stand open on that side,[620] controlled by death—all concealed from humanity, who are unable to protect themselves from them and unaware of them.’

“*Have you seen the gates of deep darkness?* Who are *the gates of death?* And who are *the gates of deep darkness?* Actually, *death* and *deep darkness* are as one, a single coupling: *death*, as has been said, Angel of Death, as has been established;[621] צלמות (*tsalmavet*), *darkness*—צל מות (*tsel mavet*), *shadow of death*,[622] riding upon it, its shadow and potency, coupling as one in a single nexus, becoming one.[623]

“All those rungs issuing from them, linked with them, form their gates. As is written above: *Lift up your heads, O gates!…* (Psalms 24:7)[624]—those gates being rivers and streams, six directions of the world[625]—so too there are gates on the Other Side, well-known rungs ruling the world. *Gates of death, gates of the shadow of death*—one female, one male, the two of them as one.

“All this the blessed Holy One declared to Job in response to all those words he uttered: *As a cloud fades and vanishes, so whoever goes down to Sheol rises no more* (Job 7:9)[626]—and all other such words. The blessed Holy One said, *‘Have the gates of death been revealed to you?*—so that you realize they are all in My power, all destined to be exterminated from the world, as is written: *He will swallow up death forever* (Isaiah 25:8)?’

“Come and see: *Elohim remembered Rachel; Elohim listened to her and opened her womb* (Genesis 30:22). Why two: *Elohim, Elohim?* One from World of the Male,[627] one from World of the Female,[628] because the matter depends on the flux of destiny.[629]

“When Rachel was aroused by this name, as is written: *May YHVH* יוסף (*yosef*), *add, another son to me!* (ibid., 24), Jacob knew she was worthy of completing all those tribes and would not endure in the world.[630] So he wanted to leave but could not. However, when Benjamin’s time approached, he fled, so that the house would not be completed, linked with the holy world in an alien land.[631]

“This accords with what is written: *Elohim said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and your birthplace, and I will be with you’* (ibid. 31:3).[632] What does this mean: *I will be with you?* He was really telling him: ‘Until now Rachel was with you, essence of the house. From here on, I will be with you, possessing the house with you, with twelve tribes.’[633] This accords with what is written: *‘When I was returning from Paddan, Rachel died* עלי (*alai*), *upon me* (ibid. 48:7)—on account of me![634] Because of me this event happened: she was thrust aside, while another dweller came and took over the house because of me, to dwell with me.’”[635]

He said, “נקבה (*Noqvah*), *Name, your wages due from me, and I will give”* (ibid. 30:28). What does *noqvah* mean? Rabbi

Yitsḥak said, “That wicked one[636] said, ‘I see that Jacob rivets his eyes upon נוקבי (*nuqvei*), females[637] [161a]—that’s how I’ll get him to serve me!’ So he said, *‘Noqvah your wages*—here is נקבה (*neqevah*), a female, for *your wages*, just like before. *And I will give*—tell me which female you’ve been ogling *and I will give* her in exchange for your labor.’

“*Jacob replied, ‘Don’t give me anything’* (ibid., 31)—‘Perish the thought! Whatever I did, I did for the glory of the Holy King,[638] not out of selfish lust. So *don’t give me anything,* since that is not my intention. Rather, *if you will do this for me*…’ (ibid.).”[639]

That day he removed the streaked and spotted he-goats… (ibid., 35).[640] Rabbi El’azar opened, “*YHVH, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy mountain? He who walks blamelessly and does what is righteous*… (Psalms 15:2).[641] We and the Companions have already established this: *He who walks* תמים (*tamim*), *blamelessly*—Abraham, who, when he was circumcised, was called *tamim*.[642]

“*And does what is righteous*—Isaac.[643]

“*And speaks the truth*—Jacob.[644] Surely Jacob cleaved to truth. If so, then why did he act this way with Laban?[645] Because Jacob was examining the hour of his zodiacal constellation,[646] for one is permitted to examine his hour before returning to his country. If his constellation rises in accord with his undertaking, fine; if not, he should not take a step until it ascends favorably.

“Come and see what is written: *Let my honesty testify for me on a future day* (ibid., 33).[647] For he didn’t try to obtain something from him for nothing; rather, in total honesty and perfect intention.[648] Furthermore, he obtained Laban’s permission.[649] Concerning this is written: *I have divined that YHVH has blessed me because of you* (ibid., 27). How many types of sorcery Laban employed, examining his zodiacal constellation on account of Jacob![650] He

discovered every month in his flock a hundred extra sheep, a hundred lambs, a hundred goats, all because of Jacob."

Rabbi Abba said, "A thousand extra sheep, a thousand lambs, a thousand goats Jacob brought him every single month, as is written: *For the little you had before I came has expanded abundantly, and YHVH has blessed you wherever I set foot* (ibid., 30). Now, blessing from above is never less than a thousand of every single species:[651] of sheep, a thousand appeared; of lambs, a thousand appeared; of goats, a thousand appeared. Upon whatever supernal blessing settles, never less than a thousand; so eventually, on account of Jacob, Laban attained vast wealth.

"When Jacob sought to obtain his payment, he found only ten of every species;[652] yet even this he considered immense wealth. Look how little he took for himself from all that his virtue had provided to Laban! All that Jacob attained was by force, by taking those rods and placing them facing the flock.[653]

"Come and see how hard that perfect one, Jacob, toiled for Laban. It is written: *He put a distance of three days between himself and Jacob* (ibid., 36). Even though Jacob brought him all that wealth, Laban didn't want Jacob's wages to be as agreed. Rather, he took ten of this and ten of that, and gave it to him, saying: 'Take these, and if they bear young, then just as you said: whatever they bear of that pattern will be your wages.'[654] As is written: *You switched my wages ten* מונים (*monim*), *times* (ibid. 31:41)—ten מן (*min*), of, this and ten *min*, of, that—and similarly: *Your father has cheated me and switched my wages ten* מונים (*monim*), *times* (ibid., 7).[655] Yet with these ten he engaged in serving the blessed Holy One, who blessed him. Whatever Laban agreed to with Jacob, he went back on his word—seizing everything from Jacob—until the blessed Holy One felt compassion on him, wresting forcefully what was his."[656]

Rabbi El'azar said, "All these verses come to reveal wisdom, for we have learned: Among supernal entities, some depend on action, some on speech, some on aspiration of the heart.[657] Whoever wishes to draw down blessings by prayer—with speech and aspiration;[658] if not by prayer, they depend on action.[659]

"Come and see Perfect Jacob:[660] whatever he did, he did in wisdom. It is written: *He placed the rods that he had peeled in the channels, in the watering troughs* (ibid. 30:38)[661]—all in wisdom, to draw down blessings from the bubbling spring of all to all those supernal rungs, his allotted share.[662]

"*The rods*. What does *rods* mean? Rungs, courts of justice.[663]

"*That he had peeled*—stripping them of Judgment.[664]

"ברהטים (*Ba-rehatim*), *In the channels*—corresponding to what is written: *A king is bound* ברהטים (*ba-rehatim*), *in the flowing tresses* (Song of Songs 7:6), for from that king, blessings flow to all worlds.[665]

"Alternatively, [161b] *A king is bound in the rehatim*—this *king is bound* in those supernal *channels*, through which blessings flow to all from the supernal king.[666]

"*In the watering troughs*—whence all is watered.[667] *Watering troughs*—streams gushing and flowing till they reach the site where they gather.[668]

"*Where the flock came to drink* (ibid.),[669] as is said: *watering all beasts of the field*… (Psalms 104:11).[670] At that site where all waters gather, all come to drink.

"*They were in heat* (Genesis, ibid.).[671] What does this mean: *they were in heat?* Come and see: When the north wind blows, waters congeal—no longer flowing out, no one watered—since Judgment impends and the cold of the north freezes water.[672] When the south wind arouses, waters warm—their ice melting away—so they flow.[673] Then all are watered, for the warmth of the south thaws the water, and all warm up, delighting to drink from what was previously

cold of the north, as is written: *They were in heat when they came to drink*.

"ויחמנה (*Va-yeḥamnah*), *They were in heat?* But look at what is written: ויחמו (*Va-yeḥemu*), *They were in heat* (ibid., 39)![674] However, they are all female.[675]

"So Jacob intended to perform an action in wisdom, as is written: *Jacob took rods of fresh poplar…* (ibid., 37)."[676]

He opened, saying, "כי יעקב בחר לו יה ישראל לסגולתו (*Ki Ya'aqov baḥar lo Yah, Yisra'el lisgullato*), *For Jacob, chose for himself Yah, Israel as his own treasure* (Psalms 135:4).[677]

"Come and see: *Ki Ya'aqov baḥar lo Yah, For Jacob, chose for himself Yah*. So far, we don't know who chose whom: if the blessed Holy One chose Jacob, or Jacob chose the blessed Holy One![678] However, from what a verse reveals, we know that the blessed Holy One selected Jacob for His share, as is written: *For YHVH's share is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance* (Deuteronomy 32:9).

"Come and see: Similarly, Jacob selected his allotted portion as his share,[679] ascending above all rungs,[680] obtaining for his share *rods of fresh* לבנה (*livneh*), *poplar*[681]—namely, white rung of the right side;[682] *almond and plane*—namely, red rung of the left side.[683]

"*He peeled white stripes in them*, stripping it of Judgment, joining it to the right.[684] He entered between them and took them as one, so all became one in two colors.[685] Nevertheless, *exposing the white*, so that white would be revealed over red.[686] Why all this? To draw blessings to his allotted rung from the bubbling spring of all, to balance this rung, three as one.[687]

"*In the channels, in the watering troughs* (ibid., 38), as we have established. Then, by this act of wisdom,[688] blessings flow below and all those worlds are watered, while blessings settle upon him[689]—as they have established, for it is written: *In the morning he devours prey*, and then: *at evening he divides the spoil* (Genesis 49:27), [162a] so that all worlds below are blessed.[690]

“Jacob took his share of those blessings settling upon him below, since he is the share of the blessed Holy One.”

Rabbi Yeisa the Younger[691] was in the presence of Rabbi Shim’on. He asked him, “Regarding what is written: *Blessings upon the head of the righteous one* (Proverbs 10:6), the verse should read: *upon the righteous one*. Why *upon the head of the righteous one*?”

He replied, “*Head of the righteous one* is Holy Corona, as has been established.[692]

“Further, *head of the righteous one* is Jacob, who receives blessings and channels them to Righteous One, from where they are flung in every direction, so all worlds are blessed.[693]

“Further, *Blessings upon the head of the righteous one—head of the righteous one* is the name given to the site of head of Covenant, from which bubbling springs gush.[694] Orifice of a flask, pouring wine, is a head.[695] Similarly, *head of the righteous one*—that site flinging springs to female is called *head of the righteous one*.[696] Righteous One is head, in which all blessings abide.

“Further, one who succeeds in guarding the sign of the holy covenant and enacts the commandments of Torah is called Righteous, so called from his head to his feet.[697] When blessings flow into the world, they settle upon his head—from there subsisting in the world through holy, virtuous sons whom he engenders.”

Rabbi Yeisa inquired further, saying, “It is written: *I have been* נער (*na’ar*), *young, and now I am old, and I have never seen a righteous man forsaken or his seed begging bread* (Psalms 37:25). They have established that this verse was uttered by the Prince of the World.[698] If so, it is imbued with more wisdom than people imagine.”[699]

He replied, “Correct, my son! For it pertains to holy union. *I have been na’ar, young, and now I am old*. So it is![700] *I have never seen a righteous man forsaken*—in

praise of this union, in which day is never lacking night, for night is with him always,[701] and Righteous One is linked above, linked below.[702] *Or his seed begging bread*. What does this mean? When He flings and streams seed, He does not woo the female, since She abides with Him—never parting from Him, prepared for Him.[703] For seed flows only when female is prepared, [162b] their mutual desire as one, in single cleaving, inseparable. So He doesn't have to woo Her."

He said, "But during exile, not so!"[704]

He replied, "It is written: *his seed*, not *him*. When does it issue forth? When female cleaves firmly to male.[705]

"Now, you might ask *'I have never seen a righteous man forsaken*—what about during exile?'[706] But look, He is linked above, *never forsaken*![707] At other times He is not *forsaken* by female, linked above, linked below.[708] During exile, linked above; at other times, in both directions, above and below; so He is never *forsaken*.

"It is written: *God placed them in the expanse of heaven* (Genesis 1:17)[709]—Righteous One.[710] Although it is said: *in the expanse of heaven*, precisely *in the expanse of heaven*, consummation of the body.[711]

"Come and see: There are two expanses—beginning and completion—corresponding to one another. Eighth expanse, in which all stars are embedded, small and large—supernal, concealed expanse sustaining all, from which all issues. This is eighth from below to above, beginning, generating all.[712]

"Similarly, eighth expanse from above to below, in which all lights and lamps are embedded, absorbing all, consummation of all.[713] Just as within the eighth expanse that is beginning of all, all lights are suspended, radiating from there, so this too is eighth expanse, all lights suspended within, absorbed, radiating from there to all worlds. Beginning and completion abide in a single pattern, forming a flowing river whose waters never cease[714]—all so

that completion resembles beginning. Therefore, *God placed them in the expanse of heaven*. Why? *To shine upon earth* (ibid.).[715] Although already explained, all shares a single pattern.[716] This is lucidity of the word.

"What differentiates one from the other? One sustains and nourishes the higher world, including itself, along with all those supernal aspects,[717] while the other sustains and nourishes the lower world along with all those lower aspects.[718]

"Now, you might ask 'Who is the higher world? After all, that eighth expanse, supernal, concealed, is the higher world and so it is named, for there are two worlds, as has been explained.'[719]

"Well, it is the higher world, and all those issuing from it are named after it,[720] while all those issuing from the lower world are named after it. All, this and that, all one. Blessed be He forever and ever!

"Come and see: *The trees of YHVH are sated, the cedars of Lebanon that He planted* (Psalms 104:16). Who is *Lebanon?* This has already been established, this verse explained.[721]

"*There birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the junipers* (ibid., 17). *There birds build their nests*. Where? In *Lebanon*. These are two birds we have discussed in numerous places, [163a] from whom numerous other birds disperse. However, these are supernal, issuing from Lebanon, concealed.[722] Mystery of the word: *Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, the name of the younger was Rachel* (Genesis 29:16).[723]

"*The stork has her home in the junipers*, as is written: *the name of the elder was Leah*.[724]

"*Has her home in the junipers*—in those six supernal sons, six directions of the world, as has been said.[725]

"Why is She called חסידה (*ḥasidah*), *stork?* Because this is the higher world—though called female[726]—for when it expands, all goodness and radiance issue. Since She is

ḥasidah, חסד (*Ḥesed*) issues from Her, primordial light, as is written: *Elohim said, 'Let there be light!'*… (ibid. 1:3).[727]

"So, *She has her home in the junipers*, ברושים (*Beroshim*), *Junipers*. Do not read ברושים (*beroshim*), *in the junipers*, but rather בראשים (*be-rashim*), *in the heads*;[728] for the other world *has her home* in lower realms and is Court of Justice of the world.[729] Sometimes She is called as above, by all those names.[730] Of this site is written: *YHVH was sorry and His heart was saddened* (Genesis 6:6) and *the burning anger of YHVH* (Numbers 25:4), which depend on this site.[731] For everything above is entirely radiant, vitality in all directions.[732] So we have learned: 'There is no sadness before the Omnipresent'—'before,' precisely![733] Therefore it is written: *Serve YHVH with joy, come before Him with singing* (Psalms 100:2). *Serve YHVH with joy*—corresponding to the higher world; *come before Him with singing*—corresponding to the lower world.[734]

"Happy are Israel in this world and in the world that is coming! So it is written: *Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by YHVH, your protecting shield!* (Deuteronomy 33:29)."

He placed the rods that he had peeled in the channels…(Genesis 30:38).[735]

Rabbi El'azar opened, "*If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will suffer* (Proverbs 9:12). Woe to the wicked of the world who neither know nor consider words of Torah! And if they do consider, words of Torah appear to them entirely empty and worthless, since they lack intelligence. All because they are empty-headed![736] For all words of Torah are entirely precious.[737] Of every single word is written: *She is more precious than rubies; nothing desired can compare with her* (Proverbs 3:15; 8:11)—with Torah.[738]

“All those close-minded, close-hearted fools, upon seeing words of Torah—as if it weren’t bad enough that they are unaware, they actually claim that those words are defective, worthless! Woe to them when the blessed Holy One avenges the humiliation of Torah[739] and they are inflicted with punishment for rebelling against their Lord!

“What is written in Torah? *It is not an empty word* מכם (*mi-kem*), *for you* (Deuteronomy 32:47); and if it is empty, it is *mi-kem*, from you—because of you![740] For Torah is completely filled with all precious stones and priceless pearls, with all the world’s treasures, as is said: *Nothing desired can compare with her*. So how can they say she is empty?!

“King Solomon declared, *If you are wise, you are wise for yourself*, because when a person grows wise in Torah, this is his own benefit, since to Torah herself he cannot add even a single letter.[741] *If you scoff, you alone will suffer*, for he will not diminish the glory of Torah in the least. His scoffing is totally his, lingering within him to eliminate him from this world and from the world that is coming.

“Come and see: When supernal letters all combine on this rung—last of all sacred, supernal rungs, filled by them, blessed by the higher world[742]—then this rung stands poised to water all those flocks, each one fittingly, each one watered with judgment and compassion.[743]

“Come and see what is written: *He placed the rods that he had peeled in the channels*. Jacob sought to inaugurate evening prayer, to illumine the moon, watering and blessing her from all directions.[744] It is written: *He placed the rods* —severe judgments issuing from supernal *Gevurah*.[745] When Jacob desired to mend this rung,[746] he removed those severe judgments from Her, setting them up *in the channels* —those four *channels* found beneath this well, which is filled by those streams and bubbling springs.[747] For as water issues from this holy well, these four receive all, so they are called *channels*.[748] There [163b] all come to drink,

and those severe judgments all stand there, to be absorbed by each one fittingly.[749]

"*Where the flock came to drink, facing the flock* (Genesis, ibid.),[750] facing one another.[751]

"*Now they were in heat* (ibid.).[752] What does this mean? When they are crowned with judgment, they heat up and roam through the world, scrutinizing the ways of human beings, whether for good or for evil.[753]

"Come and see what is written next: *They came to be in heat by the rods* (ibid., 39). Because of those rods they heated up—supervising judgments in the world, becoming appointed over the process by which human beings are judged, as is said: *This sentence by decree of the watchers, this verdict by order of the holy ones* (Daniel 4:14)."[754]

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, "*My soul cleaves to You; Your right hand supports me* (Psalms 63:9). One should contemplate this verse. *My soul cleaves to You*—for King David constantly conjoined his soul to the blessed Holy One, unconcerned with other, worldly matters, only with joining his soul and aspiration to Him. Since he cleaved to Him, He supported him, never abandoning him. From here we learn that when a person comes to cleave to the blessed Holy One, He grasps him, never abandoning him.

"Alternatively, *My soul cleaves to You*—so that his rung would be crowned above.[755] For when that rung cleaves to supernal rungs—ascending with them—the right hand grasps it, raising it, uniting it in single unification fittingly, as is said: *Your right hand will grasp me* (Psalms 139:10), and similarly: *his right hand embracing me* (Song of Songs 2:6).[756] So, *Your right hand supports me*. Once this is grasped by the blessed Holy One, it is written: *His left hand beneath my head, his right hand embracing me* (Song of Songs 2:6)[757]—single unification, single bond, whereupon that rung of his is filled and blessed. When it is filled, all

those channels are filled in four directions of the world; all those flocks are watered, each in its own direction.[758]

"When Jacob came to array this rung, he selected the right side,[759] befitting him; while the other side, unbefitting, parted from him, as is written: *He set his own herds* לבדו (*levaddo*), *apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock* (Genesis, ibid., 40).[760] *Levaddo*—he was 'by himself,' so as not to utilize other gods, other sides. Happy is the share of Israel, of whom is written: *For you are a people holy to YHVH your God…!* (Deuteronomy 14:2).[761]

"Come and see: Jacob is Glory of the Patriarchs, totality of them all.[762] Consequently he stood poised to illumine the moon, to inaugurate evening prayer.[763] The entire arrangement befitted him: he arrayed all those holy aspects on his side, separating his share from the share of other nations. These, holy aspects in supernal holiness; those, impure aspects in utter defilement. We have established this, as is written: *He set his own herds apart. He set*—arraying adornments for faith;[764] *apart*, as is said: *It is you YHVH has chosen to be His treasured people…* (ibid.).[765]

"*And did not put them with Laban's flock*—for he did not place his allotted share with them.

"So Jacob—Consummation of the Patriarchs—arrayed the mystery of faith, separating his allotted share from that of other nations. Therefore it is written: *You, cleaving to YHVH your God, are alive every one of you today!* (ibid. 4:4)."

Rabbi Abba said, "Happy is the share of Israel, who transcend all other nations of the world! For their rung is above, while the rungs of other nations of the world are below. These on the side of holiness, those on the side of impurity, these on the right, those on the left.

"Once the Temple was destroyed, what is written? *He has withdrawn His right in the face of the enemy* (Lamentations 2:3), and so: *Deliver Your right and answer me!* (Psalms 60:7).[766] Left has been strengthened, impurity

empowered; but eventually the blessed Holy One will rebuild the Temple and establish the world upon its foundations. All things will be fittingly restored, and the impure aspect will be eliminated from the world. This has been affirmed, as is written: *I will eliminate the spirit of impurity from earth* (Zechariah 13:2), [164a] and similarly: *He will swallow up death forever* (Isaiah 25:8). The blessed Holy One will then remain alone, as is written: *Idols will utterly vanish* (ibid. 2:18), and similarly: *YHVH alone will be exalted on that day* (ibid., 17)—He alone, as is written: *No alien god with Him* (Deuteronomy 32:12), for it will be eradicated from the world. Nothing will remain above or below except the blessed Holy One alone and Israel serving Him, a holy people—called 'holy,' as is written: *Whoever is left in Zion, who remains in Jerusalem, will be called holy* (Isaiah 4:3).[767] Then there will be a single world above and below—a single world above, a single world below, a single people serving Him, as is written: *Who is like Your people Israel, a single nation on earth?* (1 Chronicles 17:21)."

Rabbi Yitsḥak and Rabbi Yeisa were walking on the way. Rabbi Yesia said, "Look, *Shekhinah* is with us! Let us engage in Her words! For whoever engages in Her words and strives for Her succeeds in drawing Her near."[768]

Rabbi Yitsḥak opened, saying, "*YHVH* חי (*ḥai*), *lives! Blessed be my Rock! Exalted be the God of my salvation!* (Psalms 18:47). This verse is a mystery. *YHVH lives!* Don't we know that the blessed Holy One is called *Ḥai*, Living? However, even the righteous one is called *Ḥai*, for *Ḥai* is Righteous One above[769] and righteous one below.[770] Above, blessed Holy One is called *Ḥai;* righteous one below is called *Ḥai*, as is written: *Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of* איש חי (*ish ḥai*), *a living man* (2 Samuel 23:20).[771] Why is he called *Ḥai*? Because he is righteous, for Righteous One is called *Ḥei*, Life of, the Worlds.[772]

"*Blessed be my Rock!* All is one—*Ḥai* and *Blessed*—inseparable; for joining as one, they are called 'well of living waters,' one flowing in, one filled.[773]

"*Exalted be the God of my salvation!*—supernal world, high and exalted, exalted above all, whence all issues, all the flow flowing for the well to be fittingly filled.[774] From there it is blessed, illumining all those below.[775] When all is filled fittingly, *Exalted be the God of my salvation!*"[776]

Rabbi Yeisa opened, saying, "*He does not withdraw His eye*[777] *from the righteous; with kings upon the throne He seats them forever, and they are exalted* (Job 36:7).

"Come and see: When the wicked no longer rule the world and are eliminated, Righteous One rules the world, as is written: *He does not let the wicked live, but grants justice to the poor* (ibid., 6). Next, what is written? *He does not withdraw His eye from the righteous*. What is *His eye*? As is written: *The eyes of YHVH are upon the righteous* (Psalms 34:16).[778]

"*With kings on the throne*—reigning kings linked to the throne.[779]

"*He seats them forever, exalting them. He seats them*—enduring on the throne abidingly.

"*Exalting them*. What does this mean? To rule the world, so that the throne is established upon its supports.[780]

"Alternatively, *exalting them*, for they carry the throne and raise it above, to unite with its site fittingly;[781] then all becomes a single unity."

While they were walking, they saw a man approaching, accompanied by a child riding on his shoulders. Rabbi Yitsḥak said, "This man is certainly a Jew,[782] and he must be coming to enable people to attain merit!"[783]

Rabbi Yeisa said, "Let us be the first to benefit from him!"

When he reached them, Rabbi Yeisa asked, “Where is the pint[784] of spiced brew for sipping on the way?”[785]

He replied, “So people may attain merit through me.[786] For I have two sons who were taken captive when an officer came to town,[787] and now I am on the road to enable people to benefit through me.”[788]

They benefited along with him and gave him something to eat.[789]

Meanwhile that Jew opened, saying, “*My offering, My food for My fire-offerings, My pleasing aroma, take care to offer Me at its appointed time* (Numbers 28:2). Daily offering of the blessed Holy One—to nourish the world, providing satisfaction above and below.[790] For through arousal below, arousal above, whereby every single one is satisfied fittingly.[791]

“*My offering, My food*, as is written: *I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk* (Song of Songs 5:1).[792]

“*For My fire-offerings*, as is written: *Eat, O friends!*… (ibid.).[793]

“Now, if the blessed Holy One commands that nourishment be aroused above in order to arouse some of that nourishment below, then if one offers nourishment to sustain a life, how much more so does the blessed Holy One arouse nourishment for him from above, blessing the world for his sake!”[794]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, “Surely this mystery is fitting! Well spoken!”

Rabbi Yeisa said, “Surely for this they have said that one should never disparage anyone else in the world.[795] In two ways we have benefited from this person!”[796]

He opened,[797] saying, “This verse was discussed by [164b] Rabbi El’azar: את קרבני (*Et qorbani*), *My offering, My food for My fire-offerings. Et qorbani, My offering*—mystery of Assembly of Israel, for it is written: את (*et*)—precisely,

Et![798] *Qorbani*, My offering—קרבנא (*qorbena*), bringing near, connecting link.[799]

"*My food*—nourishment coming from above through arousal below.[800]

"*For My fire-offerings*—including other forces who must be nourished, each one fittingly.[801]

"*My pleasing aroma*—aspiration and connection, uniting all in mystery of the supernal world.[802]

"*Take care to offer Me at its appointed time*. When is *its appointed time*? When Abraham roused himself to perform His will, as is written: *Abraham arose early in the morning* (Genesis 22:3), and when Isaac was bound on the altar, which happened at twilight.[803]

"And Rabbi Ḥiyya said,[804] 'If so, the phrase *at its appointed time* should read: *at their appointed times*!'[805]

"He replied,[806] 'At that moment, fire merged with water, water with fire; so it is written: *at its appointed time*.'[807]

"Come and see: Of no other offering is written what is written here: תשמרו (*Tishmeru*), *Take care, to offer Me*. *Tishmeru* —mystery of שמור (*Shamor*), *Observe,*[808] who must be drawn above, as is written: *Tishmeru, Take care, to offer Me at its appointed time*, by right and left—as already explained, by Abraham and Isaac—all in supernal mystery."[809]

Rabbi Yeisa said, "If I came here just to hear these words, I am satisfied![810] Happy are Israel in this world and in the world that is coming! Concerning this is written: *Your people are all righteous!* (Isaiah 60:21)."[811]

Laban had gone to shear his sheep, [*and Rachel stole her father's* תרפים (*terafim*), *household idols*] (Genesis 31:19).

Rabbi Yose said, "What are *terafim*? They were idolatry. Why are they called *terafim*? Out of disgrace, as we have learned: 'place of תורף (*toref*), pudenda.'[812] And how do we know they were

idolatry? As is written: *Why did you steal my gods?* (ibid., 30), and similarly: *Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live!* (ibid., 32). Now, Laban was steeped in all sorceries of the world,[813] whereby he discovered whatever he wished to know."

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, "They were made by magic."

Rabbi Yose says, "By witchcraft."[814]

Rabbi Yehudah said, "They were made only at precise times.[815] Why are they called *terafim*? Because one strikes and then ארפי (*arpei*), withdraws, the hand, as is said: *Now* הרף (*heref*), *withdraw, your hand!* (2 Samuel 24:16). When a craftsman fashions them, an expert in moments and hours[816] oversees him, saying: 'Now withdraw!' 'Now fashion!' You won't find another craft from which one withdraws like this.

"They speak constantly, offering evil counsel to one's soul. Rachel feared they would offer advice on how to harm Jacob,[817] so to disgrace idolatry she placed them underneath her and they could not speak—since whenever they are about to speak, the space in front of them is swept and sprinkled, and now what is written? *She sat on them* (Genesis, ibid., 34).[818] They were male and female, and many rituals were performed for them before they would speak.[819] So Laban delayed for three days, being unaware that Jacob had fled, as is written: *On the third day, Laban was told that Jacob had fled* (ibid., 22)."[820]

Rabbi Yehudah continued, "He prepared himself in two ways, arming himself with all his sorcery and arming himself with weapons in order to eliminate him from the world, as is written: *An Aramean was about to destroy my father!* (Deuteronomy 26:5).[821] When the blessed Holy One saw that he intended to destroy Jacob, what is written? *Be careful not to speak to Jacob either good or bad* (Genesis, ibid., 24), corresponding to what is written: *It is in the power of my hand to do you harm* (ibid., 29). What made him so confident? The witchcraft in his hand.[822]

“Come and see: In a single day Laban covered the distance that took Jacob seven days,[823] in order to uproot him from the world. First, because he had fled; and second, because of those *terafim*. Now Rachel, even though she acted to uproot her father from idolatry,[824] was punished; for she never raised Benjamin or existed with him for even an hour —all on account of her father’s suffering, despite her good intentions.”[825]

Rabbi Yitsḥak said, “All this rebuke that Jacob delivered to Laban[826] brought him round to acknowledging the blessed Holy One, as is written: *See, God is witness between me and you!* (ibid., 50). Come and see what is written: *May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor judge between us* (ibid., 53). That wicked one reverted to his stumbling: as soon as he said *God of Abraham*, he relapsed into saying *god of Nahor*.[827] [165a]

“*Jacob swore by the Fear of his father, Isaac* (ibid.).[828] Why *by the Fear of his father, Isaac*, and not *by the God of Abraham?*[829] Because he didn’t want to trouble the Right for the sake of Laban.[830] Further, one should not swear, even in truth, by the highest realm of all.”[831]

Rabbi Yose said, “Surely for proper affirmation Jacob swore this way, fittingly. Considering the matter closely, Jacob thought: ‘Look, he said, *God of Abraham*, leaving out my father.[832] I will complete all!’ Immediately, *Jacob swore by the Fear of his father, Isaac.*[833]

“Alternatively, to be encompassed by Judgment, confronting Laban.”[834]

Jacob went on his way, and angels of God encountered him (ibid. 32:2).

Rabbi Abba opened, “*Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and named them.* אדם (*Adam*), *Human*… (ibid. 5:2).[835] How intensely we should contemplate words of Torah! Woe to the close-minded,

close-hearted, and shut-eyed! Look, Torah proclaims before them: *'Come, eat of my bread! Drink of the wine I have mingled! Whoever is simple, turn in here!' she says to those devoid of sense* (Proverbs 9:4–5).[836] But no one pays attention!

"Come and see: This verse contains supernal mysteries, within and without.[837] *Male and female He created them*—implying this nuance, implying that nuance. Implying that sun and moon share a single bond, for it is written: בראם (*bera'am*), *He created them*, as is said: *Sun, moon* עמד (*amad*), *stood still, in her lofty abode* (Habakkuk 3:11).[838] Implying that Adam and Eve were created as one in a single coupling.[839] Since they appeared in a single coupling, immediately *He blessed them*, since blessing abides only where male and female are found.[840]

"Come and see: When Jacob first set out on his journey to Haran, he was alone, unmarried. What is written? ויפגע (*Va-yifga*), *He entreated, the place* (Genesis 28:11).[841] But he was answered only in a dream.[842] Now that he was married and accompanied by all those tribes, supernal camps of angels entreated him, as it were, supplicating him, as is written: ויפגעו בו (*Va-yifge'u vo*), *They entreated him* (ibid. 32:2)—coming round to entreat him![843] Because by virtue of Jacob and those tribes, they are watered by waters of the vast sea.[844]

"Further, at first in a dream; now with eyes wide open in daylight, as is written: *When he saw them, Jacob said, 'This is a camp of God!'* (ibid. 32:3).[845]

"How [165b] did he recognize them? He saw they were the same ones he had seen in the dream.[846] So he called them מחנים (*Maḥanayim*), *Double Camps*—camps manifesting above, camps manifesting below.[847]

"Why did they appear, entreating him? Because *Shekhinah* approached him to possess the house. She was awaiting Benjamin, to possess the house fittingly along with Jacob, whereupon is written: *Jacob will return and be calm*

and secure, with no one frightening him (Jeremiah 30:10).”[848]

REFERENCE MATTER

Abbreviations

add.	addendum
Add.	Additional
Arukh	Nathan ben Yehiel of Rome, *Sefer he-Arukh*
Battei Midrashot	Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer, ed., *Battei Midrashot*
B.C.E.	before the Common Era
Beit ha-Midrash	Adolph Jellinek, ed., *Beit ha-Midrash*
BT	Babylonian Talmud
ca.	*circa*, approximately
C.E.	Common Era
chap.	chapter
Cr	Cremona edition of *Sefer ha-Zohar*
ed.	editor (pl. eds.); edition; edited by
esp.	especially
DE	*Derekh Emet*, in *Sefer ha-Zohar*, ed. Reuven Margaliot
diss.	dissertation
frag.	fragmentary
Galante	Abraham Galante, in *Or ha-Ḥammah*, ed. Abraham Azulai
Hash	*Hashmatot*
Heikh	*Heikhalot*
intro	introduction
IR	*Idra Rabba*

IZ	*Idra Zuta*
IQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JT	Jerusalem Talmud
KP	Shim’on Lavi, *Ketem Paz*
M	Mishnah
M7	MS Hebr. 217, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
Ma’arikh	Menaḥem ben Judah de Lonzano, *Sefer ha-Ma’arikh*
Mat	*Matnitin*
Matt, *Zohar*	Daniel Chanan Matt, trans. and ed., *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment*
MGWJ	*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*
MhN	*Midrash ha-Ne’lam*
MM	Shalom Buzaglo, *Miqdash Melekh*
MmD	Daniel Frisch, *Peirush Matoq mi-Devash*
Mopsik	Charles Mopsik, trans. and ed., *Le Zohar*
MS (pl. MSS)	manuscript(s)
n. (pl. nn.)	note(s)
N23	MS 1761, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
n.d.	no date
Nefesh David	David Luria, *Nefesh David*
NJV	New Jewish Version: *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*
NO	Ḥayyim Joseph David Azulai, *Nitsotsei Orot*
n.p.	no publisher
NZ	Reuven Margaliot, *Nitsotsei Zohar*
O2	MS 1564, Bodleian Library, Oxford

OḤ	Abraham Azulai, ed., *Or ha-Ḥammah*
OY	Moses Cordovero, *Or Yaqar*
P1	MS héb. 778, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris
par.	paragraph
Pereq Shirah	Malachi Beit-Arié, ed., *Pereq Shirah*
Piq	*Piqqudin*
pl.	plural
QhM	*Qav ha-Middah*
R1	MS 2971, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome
RM	*Ra'aya Meheimna*
RR	*Raza de-Razin*
Scholem	Gershom Scholem, *Sefer ha-Zohar shel Gershom Scholem*
SdTs	*Sifra di-Tsni'uta*
ShS	*Shir ha-Shirim*
SO	*Sitrei Otiyyot*
ST	*Sitrei Torah*
Sullam	Yehudah Ashlag, *Sefer ha-Zohar…im…ha-Sullam*
Tiq	*Tiqqunim* (in *Zohar Ḥadash*)
Tos	*Tosefta*
trans.	translator (s); translated by
TZ	*Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*
Vital	Ḥayyim Vital, in *Or ha-Ḥammah*, ed. Abraham Azulai
Yeraḥme'el	*Sefer ha-Zikhronot…li-Yraḥme'el*, ed. Eli Yassif
ZḤ	*Zohar Ḥadash*
Zohorei Ya'bets	Jacob Emden, *Zohorei Ya'bets*

Transliteration of Hebrew and Aramaic

א	*alef*	’[1]	ל	*lamed*	*l*
בּ	*bet*	*b*	מ	*mem*	*m*
ב	*vet*	*v*	נ	*nun*	*n*
ג	*gimel*	*g*	ס	*samekh*	*s*
ד	*dalet*	*d*	ע	*ayin*	’[2]
ה	*he*	*h*	פּ	*pe*	*p*
ו	*vav*	*v*	פ	*phe*	*f*[3]
ז	*zayin*	*z*	צ	*tsadi*	*ts*
ח	*ḥet*	*ḥ*	ק	*qof*	*q*
ט	*tet*	*t*	ר	*resh*	*r*
י	*yod*	*y, i*	שׁ	*shin*	*sh*
כּ	*kaf*	*k*	שׂ	*sin*	*s*
כ	*khaf*	*kh*	ת	*tav*	*t*

The English equivalent letter is doubled when a strong *dagesh* in Hebrew or Aramaic characterizes a verbal conjugation or indicates an assimilated letter, e.g., *dibber, yitten*. The English letter is not doubled when preceded by a hyphenated prefix, e.g., *ha-sefer, la-melekh, mi-tokh*.

Proper names that appear in roman type do not follow the above schema. Biblical names are rendered according to the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*. Rabbinic names are rendered according to common convention, e.g., Akiva, Resh Lakish. Medieval names are Anglicized, e.g., Moses de León, Joseph Gikatilla. Authors’ names in the Bibliography follow library listings or the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

1. *Alef* is not transliterated at the beginning or end of a word nor after a hyphenated prefix. Elsewhere it is transliterated only when accompanied by a vowel, e.g., *Shemu'el*.

2. *Ayin* is not transliterated at the beginning of a word, nor after a hyphenated prefix, nor, unless accompanied by a vowel, at the end of a word.

3. Occasionally transliterated as *ph* to compare or contrast it to the letter *pe*.

Glossary

alef The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; the beginning of divine and human speech.

amidah "Standing"; the central prayer, recited three times daily.

Ayin "Nothingness"; the creative "no-thingness" of God, out of which all being emanates.

Binah "Understanding"; the third *sefirah*; the Divine Mother who gives birth to the seven lower *sefirot*.

blessed Holy One Common rabbinic name for God. In the *Zohar* it often designates *Tif'eret*.

Din "Judgment"; the fifth *sefirah*; the left arm of the divine body, balancing *Ḥesed*. The roots of evil lie here; also called *Gevurah*.

Eikhah The Book of Lamentations.

Ein Sof "There is no end"; that which is boundless; the Infinite. The ultimate reality of God beyond all specific qualities of the *sefirot*; the God beyond God.

Elohim "God, gods"; a biblical name for God. In the *Zohar* it has various sefirotic associations: *Binah, Gevurah, Shekhinah*.

Gedullah "Greatness"; the fourth *sefirah*; the outpouring of God's great goodness; also called *Ḥesed*.

Gevurah "Power"; the fifth *sefirah*; also called *Din*.

halakhah "Practice, law," from the root הלך (*hlkh*), "to walk": the way that one should follow.

Haqdamat Sefer ha-Zohar "Introduction to the *Zohar*"; not an introduction per se but a typical collection of

passages, apparently intended to introduce the reader to the atmosphere of the book. *Zohar* 1:1a–14b.

Hashmatot "Omissions"; additions printed at the end of each of the three standard Aramaic volumes of the *Zohar*, drawn from the Cremona edition and *Ḥadash*.

ḥasid, pl. ***ḥasidim*** "Pious one," devotee, saint, lover of God.

Heikhalot "Palaces"; descriptions of the heavenly palaces in *Zohar* 1:38a–45b; 2:244b–268b.

Ḥesed "Loving-kindness, love, grace"; the fourth *sefirah*; the right arm of the divine body, balancing *Din;* also called *Gedullah*.

Hod "Splendor"; the eighth *sefirah*; the left leg of the divine body; source of prophecy along with *Netsaḥ*.

Ḥokhmah "Wisdom"; the second *sefirah*; the primordial point of emanation.

Holy Ancient One The most ancient manifestation of *Ein Sof* through *Keter*, Its crown.

idra "Threshing place," assembly.

Idra Rabba "The Great Assembly"; a description of the gathering of Rabbi Shim'on and the Companions at the threshing house, where profound mysteries of divine being are expounded. *Zohar* 3:127b–145a.

Idra Zuta "The Small Assembly"; a description of the last gathering of Rabbi Shim'on and the Companions, the master's final teachings, and his ecstatic death. *Zohar* 3:287b–296b.

Israel Often, the people of Israel.

Kabbalah Hebrew, קבלה (*qabbalah*), "receiving, that which is received, tradition"; originally referring to tradition in general (or to post-Mosaic Scripture), but from the thirteenth century onward, specifically to the esoteric teachings of Judaism.

Keter "Crown"; the first *sefirah*; coeternal with *Ein Sof*; also called *Ratson* ("Will") and *Ayin* ("Nothingness").

Lilith A demoness who harms babies and seduces men; married to Samael.

Malkhut "Kingdom"; the tenth *sefirah*, ruling the lower worlds; also called *Shekhinah*.

Matnitin "Our Mishnah"; short pieces scattered throughout the *Zohar*, most of which appear as utterances of a heavenly voice urging the Companions to arouse themselves and open their hearts to the mysteries. Some of them contain principles of kabbalistic teaching in a condensed form, constituting a kind of mystical Mishnah, expounded in the main section of the *Zohar*.

midrash, pl. **midrashim** Homiletical or legal interpretation of the Bible.

Midrash ha-Ne'lam "The Concealed Midrash, the Esoteric Midrash"; an early stratum of the *Zohar*. Its language is a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on the Torah pertains to several portions of Genesis, the beginning of Exodus, and several other portions; it is printed partly alongside the main text of the *Zohar* and partly in *Zohar Ḥadash*. *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Song of Songs, Ruth, and Lamentations is printed in *Zohar Ḥadash*. The subject matter of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* is mostly Creation, the soul, and the world to come; its style is often allegorical.

Mishnah Collection of oral teachings compiled near the beginning of the third century by Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi; the earliest codification of Jewish Oral Law; the core of the Talmud.

mitsvah, pl. ***mitsvot*** "Commandment"; one of the 613 commandments of the Torah or one of various rabbinic precepts; religious duty; by extension, good deed.

Netsaḥ "Endurance"; the seventh *sefirah*; the right leg of the divine body; source of prophecy along with *Hod*.

Oral Torah The rabbinic interpretation of the Written Torah (the Five Books of Moses); in Kabbalah, a symbol of *Shekhinah*.

Other Side Aramaic, סטרא אחרא (*Sitra Aḥra*); the demonic realm, shadow of the divine.

parashah "Portion"; portion of the Torah read on a particular Sabbath, named after its opening word (or phrase) or a key word (or phrase) in the opening sentence.

Piqqudin "Commandments"; kabbalistic interpretations of the commandments scattered throughout the *Zohar* (to be distinguished from *Ra'aya Meheimna*).

Qav ha-Middah "The Standard of Measure"; a detailed description of the process of emanation delivered by Rabbi Shim'on. *Zohar Ḥadash* 56d–58d.

Ra'aya Meheimna "The Faithful Shepherd"; a separate composition on the kabbalistic meaning of the commandments, printed piecemeal in the *Zohar*. Here Moses, the Faithful Shepherd, appears to Rabbi Shim'on and the Companions, revealing secrets.

Raḥamim "Compassion"; the sixth *sefirah*, harmonizing the polar opposites, *Ḥesed* and *Din*; also called *Tif'eret*.

Rav Metivta "Head of the Academy"; an account of a visionary journey of Rabbi Shim'on and the Companions to the Garden of Eden, where they hear mysteries concerning the life to come from one of the heads of the heavenly academy. *Zohar* 3:161b–174a.

Raza de-Razin "The Secret of Secrets"; a separate section dealing with physiognomy and chiromancy (*Zohar* 2:70a–75a, *Zohar Ḥadash* 35b–37c). A second version is incorporated into the main body of the *Zohar* (2:70a–78a).

Rosh Hashanah The Jewish New Year, celebrated on the first two days of the Hebrew month Tishrei.

Rut The Book of Ruth.

Samael Prince of demons, married to Lilith; identical with Satan.

Sava "The Elder."

Sava de-Mishpatim "The Old Man of [Torah portion] *Mishpatim*"; an account of the Companions' encounter with

a donkey-driver who turns out to be a master of wisdom. *Zohar* 2:94b–114a.

Sefer ha-Zohar "The Book of Radiance."

sefirah, pl. ***sefirot*** Literally, "counting," number, numerical entity; in Kabbalah, one of the ten aspects of divine personality, nine of which emanate from *Ein Sof* and the first *sefirah*, *Keter*. See the diagram on page ix.

Shaddai An obscure divine name, which may originally have meant "[God of] the mountain." In Kabbalah it often denotes *Shekhinah*.

Shekhinah "Presence," divine immanence; the tenth and last *sefirah*; female partner of *Tif'eret*; also called *Malkhut*.

Shema Literally, "hear"; central prayer recited morning and evening, comprising Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21; and Numbers 15:37–41. The opening verse is: *Hear O Israel! YHVH our God, YHVH is one!*

Shir ha-Shirim The Book of Song of Songs.

Sifra di-Tsni'uta "Book of Concealment"; an anonymous, highly condensed commentary on the beginning of the Torah in short, obscure sentences, divided into five chapters. Its subject is the mysteries of divine being. *Zohar* 2:176b–179a.

Sitrei Otiyyot "Secrets of the Letters"; a discourse by Rabbi Shim'on focusing on the letters of the divine name *YHVH* and how they symbolize the process of emanation. *Zohar Ḥadash* 1b–7b.

Sitrei Torah "Secrets of Torah"; interpretations of certain verses of Genesis, printed in separate columns parallel to the main body of the *Zohar* and in *Zohar Ḥadash*. It includes allegorical explanations of the mysteries of the soul.

Talmud Each of the two compilations of Jewish law, legend, ethics, and theology comprising the Mishnah and its vast commentary (the Gemara) by rabbis of the third through fifth centuries. The Jerusalem Talmud was

compiled ca. 400 C.E.; the Babylonian Talmud, about one hundred years later.

tanna, pl. ***tanna'im*** "One who repeats, teacher"; an authority cited in the Mishnah or belonging to the Mishnaic period (first two centuries of the Common Era); an Amoraic scholar whose task was to memorize and recite tannaitic texts.

Targum "Translation"; an Aramaic translation of the Torah or the Bible.

tav The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

tefillin "Phylacteries"; two black leather boxes containing passages from the Torah (Exodus 13:1–10, 11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21) written on parchment. They are bound by black leather straps on the left arm and on the head, and are prescribed for men to wear during weekday morning prayer. Each of the biblical passages indicates that the Children of Israel should place a sign upon their hand and a frontlet (or reminder) between their eyes.

Tif'eret "Beauty, glory"; the sixth *sefirah*, harmonizing the polar opposites, *Ḥesed* and *Din*; male partner of *Shekhinah*; the torso of the divine body; also called *Raḥamim*.

Tiqqunei ha-Zohar "Embellishments on the *Zohar*"; an independent book whose setting is similar to *Ra'aya Meheimna*. It comprises a commentary on the beginning of Genesis, each *tiqqun* opening with a new interpretation of the word בראשית (*be-reshit*), "in the beginning."

Tiqqunim "Embellishments"; additional material in the genre of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, printed in *Zohar Ḥadash* 93c–122b.

Torah "Instruction, teaching"; the Five Books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy); by extension, the entire corpus of Jewish religious literature.

Tosefta "Addenda"; in rabbinic literature, a collection of laws parallel to and contemporary with the Mishnah. In

the *Zohar, Tosefta* is similar to *Matnitin*.

Tsaddiq "Righteous One"; a name for *Yesod*, the ninth *sefirah*.

Written Torah The Five Books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy); in Kabbalah, a symbol of *Tif'eret*.

Yah A contracted form of the divine name *YHVH*.

Yanuqa "The Child"; the story of a wonder child who confounds and amazes the Companions. *Zohar* 3:186a–192a.

Yesod "Foundation"; the ninth *sefirah*, who channels the flow of emanation to *Shekhinah*; the phallus of the divine body; also called *Tsaddiq*.

YHVH The ineffable name of God, deriving from the root הוה (*hvh*), "to be." In the *Zohar* it often symbolizes *Tif'eret*.

Yom Kippur The Day of Atonement, observed on the tenth of the Hebrew month Tishrei.

zohar "Radiance, splendor."

Zohar Ḥadash "New Zohar"; a collection of Zoharic texts not included in the early editions of the *Zohar*. It was first printed in Salonika in 1597. The title is misleading since *Zohar Ḥadash* contains much of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*, an early stratum of the *Zohar*.

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1. For a list of eighty-four *Zohar* manuscripts, see Rubin, “Mif al ha-Zohar,” 172–73.

2. References to *Alfa Beita de-Ven Sira* are cited according to Yassif, *Sippurei Ben Sira bi-Ymei ha-Beinayim*.

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1. **not turning back to their Lord** In sincere repentance.

2. ***stubborn-hearted*** See BT *Berakhot* 17b: “Rav Ashi said, ‘The residents of Mata Meḥasya are *stubborn-hearted*, for they see the glory of Torah twice a year [at the semiannual study sessions], yet none of them has ever converted.’”

3. ***righteousness…* Torah** The two are equated in *Midrash Mishlei* 11:4 and *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 1, based on Deuteronomy 6:25. See *Rut Rabbah, Petiḥta* 1; *Zohar* 1:199a.

4. ***righteousness…* the blessed Holy One…** *Tif’eret*, the blessed Holy One, is named צדקה (*tsedaqah*), *Righteousness*. See *Zohar* 2:59a, 90b; 3:89a–b, 108b.

5. **far from peace…** Far from *Yesod*, the divine phallus, who brings peace by uniting *Tif’eret* with *Shekhinah*. See BT *Shabbat* 152a, where Rabbi Shim’on son of Ḥalafta refers to the phallus as “peacemaker of the home.”

6. **Abraham sought to draw near… and was drawn near** See BT *Shabbat* 104a: “Resh Lakish said, ‘… If one comes to defile himself, he is provided an opening; if one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.’”

Cf. *Makkot* 10b: “Rabbah son of Bar Ḥana said in the name of Rabbi Huna (some say, Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi El’azar), ‘From the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, it can be demonstrated that one is led on the path one wishes to take.’”

See *Zohar* 1:54a, 56b, 62a, 169b, 198b; 2:50a; 3:47a.

7. **Because he loved *tsedeq*, *righteousness*…** Because Abraham approached *Shekhinah*, known as *tsedeq*, he was drawn near *Tif’eret*, the blessed Holy One, known as *tsedaqah*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:6.

8. **no one knows or reflects upon what the world stands…** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: “Rabbi Yose says, ‘Woe to creatures, who see yet know not what they see, who stand yet know not upon what they stand! Upon what does the

earth stand? Upon the pillars, as is said: *Who shakes the earth from her place, and her pillars tremble* (Job 9:6). The pillars [stand] upon the waters.... The waters, upon the mountains.... The mountains, on the wind.... The wind, on the storm.... The storm is suspended from the arm of the blessed Holy One.'"

9. **He made the heavens of fire and water...** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 4:7: "*God called the expanse* שמים (*shamayim*), *Heaven* (Genesis 1:8). Rav said, 'אש ומים (*Esh u-mayim*), Fire and water.' Rabbi Abba son of Kahana said in the name of Rav, 'The blessed Holy One took fire and water and intermingled them, and from them heaven was made.'" In Kabbalah these two elements symbolize *Gevurah* and *Ḥesed*, on the left and right sides of the sefirotic tree.

10. **Afterward they congealed... through supernal spirit** Through the mediating *sefirah* of *Tif'eret*, symbolized by spirit. On the congealing of *the expanse*, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 4:2: "Rav said, 'The works of Creation [i.e., the heavens] were fluid, and on the second day they congealed. *Let there be an expanse* [*in the midst of the waters*]*!* (Genesis 1:6)—Let the expanse be firm!'"

See *Zohar* 1:16b, 87a; 2:167b; *ZḤ* 68d (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 88 (111).

11. **pillars standing only through that spirit** רוחא (*Ruḥa*) means both "spirit" and "wind." See the passage from BT *Ḥagigah* 12b cited above, note 8.

12. **All stands upon Torah...** Symbolizing *Tif'eret*, known as Written Torah. On the notion that the existence of the world depends upon Torah, see M *Avot* 1:2; BT *Shabbat* 88a, 119b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:9.

13. **At the moment midnight arouses...** At midnight God delights in the souls of the righteous in the Garden of Eden, and those who study Torah here below partake of the celestial joy. See Psalms 119:62; and BT *Berakhot* 3b: "Rabbi Shim'on the Ḥasid said, 'There was a harp suspended above [King] David's bed. As soon as midnight

arrived, a north wind came and blew upon it, and it played by itself. He immediately arose and engaged in Torah until the break of dawn.’”

In the *Zohar* this legendary custom is expanded into a ritual: all kabbalists are expected to rise at midnight and adorn *Shekhinah* with words of Torah and song in preparation for Her union with *Tif’eret*. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 146–50. This parallels the midnight vigil that was common among Christian monks from early medieval times. In *Zohar* 3:119a, Rabbi Yehudah alludes to the Christian practice: “I have seen something similar among the nations of the world.”

See *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 3:3, 111b; *Aggadat Bereshit* 23:5; BT *Sanhedrin* 102a; 2 Enoch 8:3; *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:138); *Zohar* 1:10b, 72a, 82b, 92a–b, 136b, 178b, 231b; 2:46a, 130a–b, 136a, 173b, 195b–196a; 3:21b–22b, 52b, 193a; *ZḤ* 13c (*MhN*). Cf. Matthew 25:6.

14. **all those trees in the garden sing praises…** See *Pereq Shirah*, 2:57, 80; JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77a; BT *Ḥagigah* 14b; *Zohar* 1:7a; *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:138).

15. **herald proclaims potently…** See Daniel 3:4; 7:18. In Daniel the phrase *holy ones of the Most High* refers to Israel; here, to the kabbalists who perceive the secrets. See *Zohar* 1:67b.

16. **When spirit of all spirits wafts the fragrance of the soul…** The following cryptic riddle is nearly impenetrable; I offer here one conceivable interpretation. For other interpretations, see *OY*, Vital, *KP, MM*. Similar numerical riddles appear in *Zohar* 1:32b, 72b, 151b (*Tos*); 2:12b, 95a; 3:162a.

Ḥokhmah, known as “spirit of spirits” (*Zohar* 2:174a) emanates *Binah*, source of the soul. From Her issues *Tif’eret*, the divine voice, as the flow of energy branches in four directions.

17. **One ascends to one side…** The *sefirah* of *Ḥesed* emanates to the right, and *Gevurah* to the left. *Tif’eret* mediates

between them.

18. **Two crown themselves in three…** The pair of *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, harmonized by *Tif'eret*, adorn themselves in the next sefirotic triad: *Netsaḥ*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. These unite with *Shekhinah*.

19. **One radiates colors…** *Shekhinah*, the divine rainbow, radiates colors in two directions.

20. **Six enter twelve… twenty-two** The imagery of colored light now switches to that of divine speech: the Hebrew alphabet, composed of twenty-two letters. See *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:1: "Twenty-two elemental letters: three mother letters, seven double letters, twelve simple letters."

21. **Six encompassed by ten…** The six aspects are encompassed by the decade of *sefirot*, which themselves are united and animated by *Ein Sof*.

22. **when the body is defiled** By sin or at death.

23. **soul drifts through the atmosphere of the noontime sun…** When a sinner dies, his soul is hurled through the atmosphere of the scorching sun on its way to Hell.

The image of "the hollow of a sling" derives from 1 Samuel 25:29: *The soul of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling*. See BT *Shabbat* 152a: "Rabbi Eli'ezer said, '… The souls of the wicked are continually muzzled, while one angel stands at one end of the world and another stands at the other end, and they sling their souls [the souls of the wicked] to each other, as is said: *The soul of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling*.'"

See Radak on the verse in Samuel; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 351–53 (and n. 171, where Scholem cites De León's likely source in Jacob ha-Kohen's *Sefer ha-Orah*); idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 373 (and n. 6), 399; *Zohar* 1:128a, 217b; 2:142b; 3:25a, 185b–186a, 213b; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 345–47 (who discusses the Zoharic neologism קוספיתא [*quspita*], "hollow of a sling"). In a later book (*Sefer ha-*

Mishqal, 67–68), De León rejects this particular stage of the afterlife.

24. **Dumah** Literally, "silence," a name for the netherworld in the Bible, e.g., Psalms 94:17: *Unless YHVH had been my help, my soul would have nearly dwelt in dumah*. Cf. Psalms 115:17.

In rabbinic literature Dumah is the angel in charge of souls of the dead (BT *Berakhot* 18b, *Shabbat* 152b, *Sanhedrin* 94a). In the *Zohar* he retains this role but also oversees Hell. See 1:8a–b, 94a, 102a, 124a (*MhN*), 237b.

25. **falling, not rising…** According to M *Eduyyot* 2:10, the wicked are punished in Hell for twelve months. See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a: "Transgressors of Israel who sin with their body and transgressors of the Gentiles who sin with their body descend to Hell and are punished there for twelve months. After twelve months, their body is consumed and their soul burned, and the wind scatters them under the soles of the feet of the righteous… But as for the heretics, informers, apostates, skeptics, those who rejected Torah and denied the resurrection of the dead, those who abandoned the ways of the community, those who *spread* their *terror in the land of the living* (Ezekiel 32:23), and those who sinned and made the masses sin…: these descend to Hell and are punished there for generation after generation….Hell will be consumed, but they will not be consumed." See *Zohar* 1:62b.

26. **At that moment** The moment of midnight.

27. **North** Symbolizing *Gevurah*, the divine attribute of Power.

28. **rooster…** The rooster's crow marks the moment of midnight, when spiritual seekers are expected to rise and study Torah. See above, note 13.

Cf. Rashi on BT *Eruvin* 53b, s.v. *maggidei ba-alatah*, according to whom the rooster's crows mark the various divisions of the night. See *Pereq Shirah*, 2:57 (s.v. *tarnegol*): "When the blessed Holy One comes to the righteous in the

Garden of Eden, all the trees of the Garden sprinkle spices before Him. Then he [the rooster] praises."

See Naḥmanides on Job 38:36; *Zohar* 1:10b, 92b, 218b; 2:196a; 3:22b–23b, 171b; *ZḤ* 88a (*MhN, Rut*).

29. **the blessed Holy One and all the righteous…** See BT *Shabbat* 63a: "Rabbi Abba said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish, 'When two disciples of the wise listen to one another in *halakhah*, the blessed Holy One listens to their voice, as is said: *You who dwell in the gardens, companions listen for your voice; let me hear!*'" See *Zohar* 1:92a, 178b, 231b; 2:46a; 3:13a, 22a, 213a.

30. ***YHVH said to Abram*, [*"Go you forth…*]** The verse continues: *from your land, from your birthplace* [or: *kinfolk*], *from your father's house, to the land that I will show you!"*

31. ***Haran…*** Abram's brother.

32. **What is the point here?** What is the connection between the death of Haran and God's command to Abram?

33. **no one had ever died in the lifetime of his father In** fact, according to the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, a number of earlier biblical figures died while their fathers were still alive, e.g., Abel in the lifetime of his father Adam, Enoch in the lifetime of Jared, and Lamech in the lifetime of Methusaleh. The *Zohar*'s claim here is apparently derived from *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 11:28; cf. *Midrash ha-Gadol*, ad loc.

34. **When Abram was cast into the fire, Haran was killed…** According to rabbinic tradition, Abram was cast into a fiery furnace by King Nimrod. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 38:13: "*Haran died in the presence of Terah his father*. Rabbi Ḥiyya said, 'Terah was an idol-worshiper [and manufacturer]. Once he traveled somewhere and left Abraham to sell in his place. A man approached, wanting to buy. He [Abraham] asked him, "How old are you?" He replied, "Fifty years old." He said, "Woe to such a man! You are fifty years old and would bow down to an object one day

old!” Ashamed, he walked away. Later a woman came carrying a plate of fine flour. She said, “Here, offer this to them!” He rose, took a stick, and broke them [the idols]. Then he put the stick in the hands of the largest. When his father returned, he demanded, “Who did this to them?” He [Abraham] replied, “How can I conceal it? A woman came carrying a plate of fine flour and said to me, ‘Offer this to them!’ This one said, ‘I will eat first!’ Another said, ‘I will eat first!’ This largest one rose, took the stick, and broke them.” He [Terah] said, “Why are you mocking me? Do they know anything?” He replied, “Don’t your ears hear what your mouth is saying?” He [Terah] seized him and delivered him to Nimrod. He [Nimrod] said, “Let us worship fire!” He [Abraham] replied, “Let us worship water, which extinguishes fire.” He said, “Let us worship water!” He replied, “Let us worship the clouds, which carry water.” He said, “Let us worship clouds!” He replied, “Let us worship the wind, which carries the clouds.” He said, “Let us worship the wind!” He replied, “Let us worship human beings, who withstand the wind.” He said, “You are playing with words. We will worship only fire. I will cast you into it, and let your God whom you worship come and save you!” Haran was standing there, undecided. He said [to himself], “If Abram is victorious, I will say that I side with him. If Nimrod is victorious, I will say that I side with him.” When Abram descended into the fiery furnace and was saved, he [Nimrod] asked him, “With whom do you side?” He replied, “With Abram.” They seized him and cast him into the fire. His innards were scorched, and he emerged and died in the presence of his father, as is written: *Haran died in the presence of Terah his father.’”*

See Theodor’s notes on the passage, and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:195–203, 213–17, and corresponding notes.

35. **The verse should read: *they set out with him…*** With Terah.

36. **Because Terah and Lot set out with Abram and Sarai…** See *Zohar* 2:31b. Cf. Rashi on Genesis 11:31; Naḥmanides on Genesis 11:28, 31.

37. **he came around to fulfilling Abram's desire** Terah acknowledged God. On the theme of Terah's repentance, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 30:4; *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 18; Rashi on Genesis 15:15; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 12:1 (*diqduq*); Naḥmanides on Genesis 11:32; *Zohar* 1:78b; 3:111b (*RM*).

38. **Their desire was to go there** Even though they stayed for some time in Haran.

39. **Whoever arouses himself to purity is assisted** See BT *Shabbat* 104a: "Resh Lakish said, '… If one comes to defile himself, he is provided an opening; if one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.'"

Cf. *Zohar* 1:53b, 54a, 76b, 169b, 198b; 2:50a; 3:47a.

40. **An entity above is not aroused until…** A general principle of Kabbalah. See *Zohar* 1:35a, 82b, 86b, 88a, 164a, 244a; 2:31b, 265a; 3:92a, nob.

"Entity" renders מלה (*millah*), "word, thing," referring to the divine word spoken to Abraham and generally to any spiritual entity.

41. **Black light is not joined with white light until…** *Shekhinah*, last of the ten *sefirot*, is known as "the speculum that does not shine" and is symbolized by the color black. She has no light of Her own but reflects the light of the other *sefirot*. Her partner, *Tif'eret*, is "the speculum that shines," symbolized by the color white. The union of this divine couple depends upon the arousal of *Shekhinah*. See the discussion of the colors of the flame in *Zohar* 1:50b–51b, 83b.

42. **אלהים (*Elohim*), *O God, do not be silent…*** אלהים (*Elohim*) is one of the names of *Shekhinah*. Here She is urged to keep singing and thereby arouse the white light of *Tif'eret* to unite with Her. See *Zohar* 1:86a; 2:256b (*Heikh*).

43. ***O invokers of YHVH, do not be silent!...*** Through prayer and holy action, human beings attract the divine.

44. ***They set out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans*** The verse continues: to *go to the land of Canaan*.

45. ***YHVH said to Abram*** The verse continues: "*Go you forth!*"

46. ***Lekh lekha, Go for yourself*** לך (*Lekh*) means "go." The following word, לך (*lekha*), means literally "to you, for you," though idiomatically it lends the verb the sense of "separating, taking leave of." See Exodus 18:27; Joshua 22:4; Sarna, *Genesis*, ad loc.

Rabbi El'azar interprets the phrase hyperliterally *Go for yourself*, for your own benefit. See Rashi and Naḥmanides, ad loc.; *Zohar* 2:32a. Cf. 1:254b (*Hash*); 3:17b, 157a; *ZḤ* 71b (*ShS*).

47. **to perfect your rung** Through discovering God and expressing love, Abraham eventually attained the rung of *Ḥesed* ("Love"). See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*), 98a; 2:36a; 3:14a.

48. **among the wicked** Among the idolaters.

49. **tested** מצרף (*Metsaref*), "Smelts, refines, tests." In *Sefer Yetsirah* the word means "to permute" the letters of the alphabet. By combining and arranging Hebrew letters in all possible ways, God creates the world. See 2:2: "Twenty-two elemental letters. He [God] engraved them, carved them, weighed them, transposed them, וצרפן (*ve-tserefan*), and permuted them—forming with them everything formed and everything destined to be formed." At the end of the book (6:4), Abraham imitates the divine act: "When Abraham our father, peace unto him, gazed, looked, saw, probed, understood, engraved, carved, וצרף (*ve-tseref*), permuted, formed, and succeeded [in creating], then the Lord of all, blessed be He, manifested to him, embraced

him, kissed him upon the head, and called him *Abraham, My lover* (Isaiah 41:8)."

50. **conduits of the inhabited world** See *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 10, where it is said that King Solomon knew the various "veins" or channels running through the earth and was thereby able to effortlessly cultivate all kinds of exotic fruit in Jerusalem. See Naḥmanides' introduction to his Commentary on the Torah.

Instead of צנורי (*tsinorei*), "conduits," several manuscripts and witnesses read סטרי (*sitrei*), "directions, sides."

51. **balance** תיקלא (*Tiqla*), a Zoharic neologism derived from the root תקל (*tql*), "weigh." The word has a wide range of meaning: "scale, hollow of the hand, fist, potter's wheel, water clock (*Zohar* 1:92b)." See *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 327–35.

Here, as suggested by Cordovero (*OY*), the word may refer to "an astrolabe," a circular instrument used to determine the position of the sun and stars. Originally devised by the Greeks, the astrolabe was further developed by Moslem astronomers, and a description of one of the improved models was translated from Arabic into Castilian by a group of Jewish scholars working under King Alfonso X of Castile (1252–1284). See *Zohar* 2:188a.

The image here derives partially from *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:2 (cited above, note 49): "Twenty-two elemental letters. He [God] engraved them, carved them, שקלן (*sheqalan*), weighed them…" Abraham imitates the divine act of weighing and gauging the elements of creation.

52. **powers appointed throughout the world** According to rabbinic tradition, the seventy nations of the world are governed by seventy angels or heavenly princes appointed by God.

See Daniel 10:20; Septuagint, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; Jubilees 15:31–32; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 11:8, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; *Tanḥuma, Re'eh* 8; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 9:19; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 24; *Zohar* 1:46b,

61a, 108b; 2:33a, 151b; 3:298b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:204–5, n. 91.

53. **central point of habitation** The land of Israel, sacred center of the world. See *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 10: "The land of Israel sits in the center of the world, Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel, the Temple in the center of Jerusalem, the nave in the center of the Temple, the ark in the center of the nave, and in front of the ark the Rock of Foundation, from which the world was founded."

See Ibn Ezra on Genesis 1:2; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 18:25; *Zohar* 2:157a, 184b, 193a; 3:65b, 161b.

On the phrase אבן שתיה (*even shetiyyah*), "Rock of Foundation" or "Rock of Weaving" (from which the world was woven), see M *Yoma* 5:2; *Tosefta, Yoma* 2:14; BT *Yoma* 54b; JT *Yoma* 5:4, 42c; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:4; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 35; *Zohar* 1:71b, 231a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:14–15, n. 39; Tur-Sinai, *Ha-Lashon ve-ha-Sefer*, 3:272; Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-Fshutah*, 4:772–73.

54. **but could not attain his desire** Abraham could not determine which heavenly power controlled the land of Israel because God Himself controls the Holy Land. See BT *Ta'anit* 10a: "The land of Israel is watered by the blessed Holy One Himself, whereas the rest of the world is watered by a messenger."

Cf. *Tanḥuma, Re'eh* 8; BT *Ketubbot* 110b; *Zohar* 1:61a, 84b, 108b; 2:33a, 151b, 209a–b.

55. **there the entire world was planted** אשתיל (*Ishshetil*), "Was planted," is a play on the rabbinic wording "from which the world הושתת (*hushtat*), was founded." See above, note 53; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 74–75 (95); *Zohar* 1:72a, 82a, 231a; 2:48b, 222a; *ZḤ* 28a (*MhN*); Liebes, *Peraqim*, 372–73.

56. **inhabited rungs** The rest of the inhabited world. See *Tosafot, Ketubbot* 112a, s.v. *Rabbi Ḥanina*.

57. **the power presiding over it** *Shekhinah*, also known as the central point. See *Zohar* 1:6a, 71b.

58. ***Haran…*** A city in northwestern Mesopotamia.

59. **What was Abraham's reason?** Why did he not continue to the land of Canaan?

60. **who overpowered whom** Abraham knew the entire hierarchy of heavenly powers.

61. **this site** The land of Canaan.

62. **לֶךְ לְךָ (*Lekh lekha*), *Go to yourself*, to know yourself…** As indicated above (note 46), לֶךְ (*lekh*) means "go," while the following word, לְךָ (*lekha*), means literally "to you, for you," though idiomatically it lends the verb the sense of "separating, taking leave of," so the phrase means *Go you forth*. Previously (page 7), Rabbi El'azar read the phrase hyperliterally: *Go for yourself*, for your own benefit. Here he adopts another hyperliteral reading: *Go to yourself*, know yourself.

See Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham*, 8,11; *On Dreams*, 1:52–60; and the comment of Moses Zacuto (*MM*), citing Ḥayyim Vital: "Every person must search and discover the root of his soul, so he can fulfill it and restore it to its source, its essence. The more one fulfills himself, the closer he approaches his authentic self."

63. ***From your land*** The full verse reads: *YHVH said to Abram, "Go you forth from your land, from your birthplace* [or: *kinfolk*], *from your father's house, to the land that I will show you."*

64. **that wisdom through which you envision and gauge your birth…** Abraham is commanded by God to reject (*go forth from*) astrology. See BT *Shabbat* 156a: "Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, '…וַיּוֹצֵא (*Va-yotse*), *He took* (*him*) *outside* (Genesis 15:5)…. He [Abraham] said before Him [God], "I have gazed at my horoscope, and I am not fated to engender a son." He replied, "צֵא (*Tse*), Leave, your astrological speculations! Israel is immune from planetary influence."'"

See *Zohar* 1:90a-b; 3:148a, 281b (*RM*); *ZḤ* 72b (*ShS*).

65. **whether you are rooted…** Whether you are destined.

66. **Why would He say *Go you forth from your land, from your birthplace?*** Abraham had already left his birthplace: Ur.

67. ***I will make of you a great nation*, because it is written…** Rabbi El'azar juxtaposes the various phrases of the divine command (Genesis 12:1) and the divine promise (12:2).

68. **Rabbi Shim'on said…** Rabbi El'azar's father offers a sefirotic interpretation. The first part of the blessing derives from *Ḥesed*, also known as *Gedullah* ("Greatness"), on the right side.

69. **left side** The *sefirah* of *Gevurah*.

70. **aspect of the middle** *Tif'eret*, balancing right and left.

71. **aspect of the land of Israel** *Shekhinah*, who watches over the land of Israel.

72. **throne of four legs, all comprised in Abraham** This sefirotic tetrad constitutes a throne for *Binah*. All are comprised in Abraham because he symbolizes *Ḥesed*, first of the four. See above, note 47.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 47:6: "Resh Lakish said, 'The patriarchs themselves constitute the [divine] Chariot.'"

Cf. Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 57; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittaḥon*, 396; *Zohar* 1:5b, 20a, 60b, 89b (*ST*), 99a, 150a, 154b, 173b, 248b; 2:144a; 3:38a, 99a; Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 32:10.

73. **since they all departed…** Terah and Lot set out together with Abraham and Sarah from Ur of the Chaldeans.

74. **sincere return of sinners** In repentance. See Ezekiel 33:11.

75. לכו לכם **(*Lekhu lakhem*), *Go you forth*** In the plural.

76. לך לך **(*Lekh lekha*), *Go you forth*** In the singular.

77. **He** Rabbi Shim'on.

78. **in order to turn back to God** On the theme of Terah's repentance, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 30:4; *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 18; Rashi on Genesis 15:15; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 12:1 (*diqduq*); Naḥmanides on Genesis 11:32; above, page 6.

79. **Abraham was saved** From Nimrod's fiery furnace. See above, note 34.

80. **to him** To Terah.

81. **This verse has been established** In the rabbinic discussion of the primordial light of Creation. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12a: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'With the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, one could gaze and see from one end of the universe to the other. When the blessed Holy One foresaw the corrupt deeds of the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Dispersion [the generation of the Tower of Babel], He immediately hid it from them, as is written: *The wicked are denied their light* [or: *The light of the wicked is withheld*]. For whom did He hide it? For the righteous in the time to come.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:6; 41:3; *Shemot Rabbah* 35:1; *Tanḥuma, Shemini* 9; *Bahir* 97–98 (147); *Zohar* 1:31b-32a, 45b-46a, 47a; 2:127a, 148b–149a, 220a–b; 3:88a, 173b.

82. **Nimrod** King of Babylonia and Assyria. See Genesis 10:8-12; above, note 34.

83. **who led all the inhabitants of the world astray** Nimrod promoted idolatry and, according to rabbinic tradition, instigated the building of the Tower of Babel. See BT *Avodah Zarah* 53b; *Ḥullin* 89a.

84. ***Lekh lekha, Go for yourself*** The phrase means idiomatically: *Go you forth*, but Rabbi Shim'on reads it hyperliterally. See above, note 46.

85. **that supernal light...** The *sefirah* of *Ḥesed*, identified with the primordial light of Creation. In the land of Israel, Abraham attained and manifested this light. See *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–b.

86. ***souls they had made in Haran*** The word נפש (*nefesh*), *souls*, is usually understood as *persons*, and the word עשו (*asu*), *made*, is understood as *acquired*, but Rabbi Shim'on reads them literally, following midrashic tradition. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:14: "*And the souls they had made in Haran*. Rabbi El'azar said in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Zimra, 'If all the nations assembled to create a single mosquito, they could not cast a soul into it, yet you say: *and the souls they had made?!* Rather, these are converts. Then the verse should read: [*and the souls*] *they had converted*. Why *they had made?* To teach you that whoever draws a gentile near is as though he created him.' Then the verse should read: *he* [Abraham] *had made*. Why *they had made?* Rabbi Ḥunya said, 'Abraham converted the men, and Sarah the women.'"

See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 32; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 12; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 12; B, 26.

87. ***As for you, you will go to your fathers in peace*** God's reassurance to Abraham. As indicated in the Midrash (in the name of Rabbi Abba son of Kahana), this divine promise implied that Terah had turned back to God and attained a place in paradise, where he awaited Abraham.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 30:4; *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 18; Rashi on Genesis 15:15; Naḥmanides on Genesis 11:32.

88. **The verse does not read *Abram set out*,... for they had previously set out...** Abram set out on his journey from Ur of the Chaldeans, so there the verse reads: *They set out...from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan*. After stopping in Haran, Abram continues his journey, so the text reads: *Abram went*.

89. **all those promises** Recorded in Genesis 12:2–3.

90. **to learn from his actions...** According to rabbinic tradition, Lot learned from Abraham how to welcome guests. See Genesis 19:1-3; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 11; *Tanḥuma*

(Buber), *Vayera* 15; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 25; *Zohar* 1:105a.

91. **This verse has been established** See BT *Ta'anit* 11a: "[The Rabbis] said, 'When a human departs to his eternal home, all his deeds are enumerated before him and he is told: "You did such and such in a certain place on a certain day." He replies, "Yes." He is then told, "חתום (*Ḥatom*), Sign!" So he signs, as is said: *By hand every human* יחתום (*yaḥtom*), *seals*.'"

See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 307; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 29.

92. **to see what he was not permitted...** To attain a vision of *Shekhinah*, who is invisible as long as the soul is dominated by the body. See *Sifra, Vayiqra, dibbura dindavah* 2:12, 4a: "Rabbi Dosa says, 'Scripture states: *No human can see Me and live* (Exodus 33:20). In their lifetime they do not see, but in their death they do!'"

See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:18: "Death is decreed upon all the righteous who spring from him [Adam]. They do not depart this life without first gazing upon the face of *Shekhinah* and reproving Adam, saying: 'You inflicted death upon us!' Adam responds: 'As for me, I possess only one sin, while in your case, every single one of you possesses more than four.'"

Cf. *Tanḥuma, Ḥuqqat* 16; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Ḥuqqat* 39; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 34; *Zohar* 1:65b, 98a (*MhN*), 99a (*ST*), 218b, 226a; 3:88a.

93. **three messengers stand over him...** See BT *Ketubbot* 104a; *Zohar* 1:98a (*MhN*); 2:199a; 3:88a, 126b.

94. **he renders an account...** Before the soul separates from the body at the moment of death. See the parable concerning the joint responsibility of body and soul in *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:1; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 4:5; BT *Sanhedrin* 91a–b; and *Zohar* 1:65b, 130b; 2:199b; 3:126b.

95. **righteous one should grasp him** Urging him to turn back to God.

96. **Elisha, who rejected Gehazi** After the prophet Elisha cured the leprosy of Na'aman the Aramean general, Na'aman offered him a gift. Elisha refused the gift, but his servant Gehazi secretly accepted it. Elisha then punished Gehazi with leprosy and dismissed him. See 2 Kings 5. According to rabbinic tradition, after leaving Elisha, Gehazi assisted King Jeroboam in the sin of the golden calves, leading Israel astray. When Elisha tried to persuade him to turn back to God, Gehazi refused. See BT *Sotah* 47a; *Mekhilta, Amaleq* (*Yitro*) 1.

97. **Similarly with Abraham** Who urged Lot to part from him. See Genesis 13:9.

98. ***The people of Sodom…*** Lot lived among them and associated with them.

99. **Regarding what you said…** See above, page 12. If the expression *set out* refers to the origin of the journey from Ur of the Chaldeans, then why does it appear here in connection with Haran, which was simply a stage on the way to Canaan?

100. **the setting out was originally from his birthplace** Ur of the Chaldeans. The setting out from Haran was secondary.

101. ***Abram took his wife Sarai*** The verse continues: *his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the souls they had made in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan*.

102. **What does *took* mean? He coaxed her with fine words** The word is explained similarly in *Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ* 1; *Sifra, Tsav, millu'im* 1:2, 40d; *Sifrei*, Numbers 92, 141; *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:5; *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 10; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Qoraḥ* 2; Rashi on Genesis 2:15; *Zohar* 1:119b.

103. **a man is not allowed to take his wife to another country…** Although according to the Mishnah, a

husband is allowed to take his wife to the land of Israel even without her consent. See M *Ketubbot* 13:11; BT *Ketubbot* 110b.

104. **Similarly it is said…** See the sources cited above, note 102.

105. **David was destined to issue from him** Ruth the Moabite, great-grandmother of David, was descended from Lot.

106. ***souls they had made…male*** **and female converts…** See above, note 86.

107. ואת הנפש **(*ve-et ha-nefesh*), *and the souls*, amplifying the meaning…** Grammatically, the accusative particle את (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when et appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:5b, 247a; 2:90a, 135b.

Rabbi Abba does not accept Rabbi El'azar's view that all the converts accompanied Abraham; only some of them did, but the word et implies that in addition the merit of all the other converted souls joined the journey.

108. **whoever leads another to virtue…** See M *Avot* 5:18: "Moses was virtuous and led many to virtue, so the virtue of many was attributed to him."

109. **Why did He open with לך לך (*Lekh lekha*)?** Why this sudden command without any introduction?

110. **by its sum He hinted at a hundred** … The numerical value of the phrase לך לך (*Lekh lekha*) is 100, indicating that a son would be born to Abraham when he reached this age. See Genesis 21:5; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 3; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 12:1.

111. **site through which one must approach…** *Shekhinah*, last of the ten *sefirot* and the first rung of spiritual ascent. The decade of *sefirot* squared equals 100, alluding to all the sefirotic possibilities contained within *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:7b, 11b, 36b–37a, 77a (*ST*); Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 4b.

112. **until he entered the land…** Only by entering the Holy Land could Abraham attain the rung of *Shekhinah*, who prevails there.

113. **why didn't he receive kingship over all Israel immediately?** Why only after dwelling in Hebron?

114. **until he joined the patriarchs, who were in Hebron…** The three patriarchs, who symbolize the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, were buried in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron. David could not attain kingship until he joined them there because *Shekhinah* (known as *Malkhut* ["Kingship"]) is completed only by that triad. See *Zohar* 1:99a, 125a, 246b; 2:31a.

115. **he lingered there for seven years…** See 2 Samuel 2:11. The seven years symbolize the seven lower *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Shekhinah*.

116. **Abraham did not enter the covenant** … Abraham was given the covenantal command of circumcision only after he entered the land, symbolizing *Shekhinah*. See Genesis 17. By being circumcised, one identifies with *Yesod*, the divine phallus, who unites with *Shekhinah*.

117. ***Abram passed through the land*** The verse continues: *as far as the site of Shechem, as far as the terebinth of Moreh. The Canaanite was then in the land*.

118. **holy name by which the world is sealed…** The divine act of sealing limits the expansion of the universe and sets its boundaries.

See *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:13; *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 1; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva* (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:363–64); *ZḤ* 76b (*MhN, Rut*); Liebes, *Torat ha-Yetsirah* , 177–89.

The seventy-two-letter divine name is derived from the description of the splitting of the Red Sea: Exodus 14:19-21. Each of these three verses contains seventy-two letters. The name is composed of seventy-two triads according to

the following pattern: the first letter of the first verse, the last letter of the second verse, the first letter of the third verse (forming the first triad); the second letter of the first verse, the penultimate letter of the second verse, the second letter of the third verse (the second triad); etc.

Here Rabbi Shim'on finds an allusion to this name in the word ויעבר (*Va-ya'avor*), *He passed*, which can be divided into two numbers: ב"ע (72), the number of triads, and ר״יו (216) the total number of letters. Elsewhere (*Zohar* 2:132b; 3:150b–151a) the name is associated with *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

See *Leqaḥ Tov*, Exodus 14:21; *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:19; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:2; Hai Gaon, *Otsar ha-Ge'onim, Ḥagigah*, 23; Rashi on BT *Sukkah* 45a, s.v. *ani;* Ibn Ezra on Exodus 14:19; *Bahir* 79 (110); *Zohar* 1:7b, 17a; 2:51b-52a, 152a, 270a; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 95-97; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, 14:67, 284–86.

119. **there is written: ויעבר יהוה (*Va-ya'avor YHVH*)**… The verse continues with a proclamation of the divine name and attributes.

120. ***The Book of Rav Yeiva Sava*** One of the many volumes housed in the real or imaginary library of the author(s) of the *Zohar*. It is cited frequently (1:47b, 117b; 2:6a, 60b, 206b; 3:7b, 155b, 289a, 290a, 295a [*IZ*]). See Matt, *Zohar*, 25; and the comment by Shim'on Lavi, *KP*, 1:22d: "All such books mentioned in the *Zohar*… have been lost in the wanderings of exile… Nothing is left of them except what is mentioned in the *Zohar*."

121. ***I will make (all My goodness) pass*** The verse continues: *before your face, I will proclaim the name YHVH in front of you*.

122. **holiness of the land, from a fittingly supernal site** The holiness of *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the land, emanating from a higher sefirotic source.

123. **from one side to the other, fittingly** Apparently, through all aspects of *Shekhinah*, or through the entire realm of the *sefirot*, as reflected in *Shekhinah*.

124. **until then the evil serpent prevailed** … *Canaan* is identified with the demonic serpent who tempted Eve. Even after Abraham entered the land, this demonic power still prevailed. See *Zohar* 1:73a.

125. **There** In the land of Canaan.

126. **that profound power ruling the land** *Shekhinah*. See above, page 9.

127. ***He moved on from there* ההרה (*ha-harah*), *to the mountain*** The verse continues: *east of Bethel, and spread his tent…, and he built an altar there to YHVH*.

128. **There he discovered הר ה׳ (*har he*), Mountain of *He*…** Rabbi Shim'on interprets the final ה (*he*) of the word ההרה (*ha-harah*), *to the mountain*, as an allusion to the divine, because *Shekhinah* is symbolized by the final ה (*he*) of the name יהוה (*YHVH*), or because the letter *he* stands for השם (*hashem*), "the [divine] name."

129. **all those rungs planted there** The various *sefirot* planted in *Shekhinah*.

130. ***He spread* אהלה (*oholoh*), *his tent*, spelled with a ה (*he*)** The spelling here in the biblical text is unusual; normally the masculine pronominal suffix is indicated by the letter ו (*vav*). The ה (*he*), a feminine marker, stimulates Rabbi Shim'on to interpret the word as: *her tent*, namely, the tent of *Shekhinah*.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:15; *Minḥat Shai* on Genesis 12:8; *Zohar* 1:73a, 83a, 84a.

131. **spreading a spread, accepting the Kingdom…** Abraham spread the canopy of *Shekhinah*, who is known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"), and acknowledged Her dominion.

132. **one for the revealed rung, one for the concealed** One for *Shekhinah*, one for the concealed realm of *Binah*, the Divine Mother. See *Zohar* 2:219a; 3:30a–b.

133. **from rung to rung** Abraham's journey is not only geographical but also spiritual, proceeding from *Shekhinah* through various *sefirot*.

134. **his rung… *the Negev*—the South, share of Abraham** The Negev is the southern region of Canaan and, by extension, *negev* also means "south" in biblical Hebrew. Here it is identified with the warmth of *Ḥesed* ("Love"). Through discovering God and expressing love, Abraham attained this rung.

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*), 98a; 2:36a; 3:14a.

135. ***famine in the land*, for no one knew how to draw near…** See Amos 8:11: *Behold, days are coming, declares YHVH, when I will send a famine through the land: not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of YHVH*.

136. **power over the land had not vitalized or nourished the land…** *Shekhinah* had not nourished the land. Both the land and *Shekhinah* Herself were not yet purified of the demonic, symbolized by Canaan. See above, pages 17–18.

137. **How did Abraham know?** That the land was not yet sanctified.

138. **only through certain rungs issuing from him** The land and its divine provider, *Shekhinah*, would be fully arrayed and perfected only when Isaac and Jacob issued from Abraham. Together, the patriarchal triad symbolizes *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, who convey the flow of emanation to *Shekhinah*.

139. **equivalent to the Garden of *YHVH*…** Egypt was famous for the rich alluvial soil along the Nile. See Deuteronomy 11:10.

140. **one river on the right… *Pishon*…** According to Genesis 2:10-11, a river issuing from Eden watered the Garden and then branched into four streams, the first of

which was named Pishon. Various authorities identify Pishon with the Nile; see Samaritan Targum, *Midrash Aggadah*, Sa'adya Gaon, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Naḥmanides, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:125a (*MhN*).

Here Rabbi Shim'on indicates that Pishon conveyed the flow of emanation from the right side of the *sefirot* to Egypt.

141. **perfect faith** The realm of the *sefirot*, specifically *Shekhinah*.

142. **all those rungs linked below** Including the demonic realm, symbolized by Egypt.

143. **since Egypt drew from the right, he went down to Egypt** Abraham was linked to *Ḥesed*, on the right, so he journeyed to Egypt, nourished by Pishon from the right.

144. **Famine prevails only when compassion withdraws from justice** When *Tif'eret*, known as *Raḥamim* ("Compassion"), separates from *Shekhinah*, characterized by *Din* ("Justice, Judgment"), the flow of emanation ceases and famine prevails.

145. **The verse should read: כאשר קרב (*Ka'asher qarav*)...** The plain sense of the verse requires an intransitive verb, כאשר קרב (*ka'asher qarav*), *when he came near*. So why does Scripture employ a transitive verb: כאשר הקריב (*ka'asher hiqriv*), *when he drew* [someone] *near*?

146. **As is written, *Pharaoh hiqriv, drew* [someone] *near*...** See *Shemot Rabbah* 21:5: "What is the meaning of *Pharaoh drew* [someone] *near?* He drew Israel back to God. Rabbi Berekhiah said, 'Pharaoh's drawing near was better for Israel than a hundred fasts and prayers. Why? Because when [the Egyptians] pursued them and [the Israelites] saw them, they were terrified and lifted their eyes to heaven and returned [to God] and prayed.'" See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40:6; *Zohar* 2:47a.

147. **those rungs** The demonic stages linked to the divine.

148. **Because Abraham went down to Egypt without permission…** The wording *Abram went down to Egypt* implies that Abraham went on his own, not as the result of a divine command. See Naḥmanides, ad loc., who explains that Abraham should have remained in Canaan, trusting in God's ability to provide for him during the famine.

149. **troubled all that night over Sarah** The anguish that Abraham must have experienced when Sarah was taken by Pharaoh (Genesis 12:15) was a punishment for his claiming that she was his sister.

150. **until that moment he had never gazed at Sarah's features…** See *Midrash Aggadah*, ad loc.: "*Now I know*. He had never looked at his wife. When he drew near to Egypt there was a river, and they went in together. She fell and he helped her up. When they reached the riverbank and she was drying her clothes, he saw her leg. He immediately said, '*Now I know* [*what a beautiful woman you are*]*!*'"

See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 5: "When they reached the gates of Egypt and stood at the Nile, Abraham saw Sarah's reflection in the river radiating like the sun. From here the sages have learned that all women compared with Sarah are like an ape compared with a human. He said to her, '*Now I know what a beautiful woman you are!*' From here you learn that previously he did not know her."

See BT *Bava Batra* 16a; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 12:11.

151. **This word ascends in two nuances** Similar expressions appear in *Zohar* 1:48b, 54a, 197b.

152. **one literal** Abraham claimed that Sarah was his sister, not his wife, because he feared that otherwise Pharaoh would have him killed. See Genesis 20:12, where Abraham explains that Sarah was his half-sister.

153. ***Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister'*** *Shekhinah* is known as Lower Wisdom, deriving from the *sefirah* of *Ḥokhmah*

(“Wisdom”). The verse in Proverbs is applied to Her, and similarly Abraham called Her *sister*. See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 20; *Zohar* 1:111b, 140b.

154. **Similarly it is written: *Say you are my sister*, and: *You speak with us*** In both verses, Rabbi Yehudah understands the feminine form את (*at*), *you*, as alluding to the divine feminine, *Shekhinah*. Though in Deuteronomy the verse is addressed to Moses, here it is interpreted as referring to *Shekhinah* speaking through Moses.

155. **thereby…** Through communion with *Shekhinah*, one attains longevity or eternal life in the world to come. See BT *Qiddushin* 39b.

156. **all those Egyptians were steeped in lechery** See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 5; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 12:33; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:18; BT *Yevamot* 98a.

157. **Because he saw *Shekhinah*** And he was sure that She would protect Sarah. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 60:16; *Zohar* 1:50a, 111b 133a, 140b; 3:52a.

158. **He had put her in a chest…** See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 5: “[Abraham] said to her, ‘The Egyptians are steeped in whoredom…. I will put you in a chest and lock you up, for I fear for myself. *When the Egyptians see you* [*and say, “This is his wife,” they will kill me and let you live*]’ (Genesis 12:12). Having done so, he approached to cross the border. The customs officials gathered and asked him, ‘What are you carrying inside the chest?’ He answered, ‘Barley.’ They said, ‘It must be wheat!’ He said, ‘So collect duty for wheat.’ They said, ‘It is pepper!’ He said, ‘So collect duty for pepper.’ They said, ‘It must be gold!’ Pressing him, they opened the chest and saw it radiant as the sun.” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40:5.

The word “customs” renders the Zoharic Aramaic קוסטונא (*qostuna*); cf. the Latin *costumen*.

159. **they saw another radiance in the chest** Instead of נהורא (*nehora*), “radiance,” several manuscripts read: דיוקנא (*deyoqna*), “image,” referring to the image of Eve.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40:5, where it is said in the name of Rabbi Yitsḥak that Sarah's beauty outshone Eve's.

160. **saw her as before** So they realized that the intense radiance emanated from her alone.

161. **Here is written: *great plagues*** The full verse reads: *YHVH plagued Pharaoh and his household with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.*

162. ***YHVH displayed signs and wonders, great and terrible, in Egypt*** The word *great* appears in both verses, linking the two sets of plagues. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 26: "Rabbi Tarfon says, 'The night that our mother Sarah was taken was the night of Passover. The blessed Holy One brought great plagues upon Pharaoh and his household to indicate that in the future He would smite the Egyptians with great plagues, as is said: *YHVH plagued Pharaoh with great plagues.*'" See Naḥmanides on Genesis 12:6, 10.

163. **Just as there ten plagues, so here ten plagues** See *Zohar* 3:52a.

164. **Why don't they conclude a blessing with me as they do with Abraham...?** In the *amidah* prayer, the first blessing concludes: "Blessed are You, *YHVH*, Shield of Abraham." David insists that God also serves as a shield for him, so he too deserves to be mentioned in the conclusion of one of the blessings.

See BT *Pesaḥim* 117b; *Sanhedrin* 107a; *Midrash Tehillim* 18:8, 25; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 45 (54); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:265, n. 94. Cf. *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1; BT *Berakhot* 16b; Acts 2:29.

Actually, an alternative version of one of the blessings of the *amidah* does conclude with David's name. See *Tosefta, Berakhot* 3:25; JT *Berakhot* 4:5, 8c; *Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:6, 59c; *Midrash Shemu'el* 26:3; *Midrash Tehillim* 29:2; Abraham ben Isaac, *Sefer ha-Eshkol*, 28; Ezra of Gerona, on *Megillah* 17b (cited in Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 57; cf. 21, n. 5); Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittaḥon*, 396; Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 32:10.

165. **Abraham I have already tried and tested…** According to rabbinic tradition, Abraham passed ten divine tests. See Jubilees 17:17; 19:8; M *Avot* 5:3; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 33; B, 36; *Midrash Tehillim* 18:25; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 26.

166. ***reins*** Kidneys, the seat of emotion.

167. **that affair with Bathsheba** The wife of Uriah the Hittite. Seeing her bathing, David was attracted to her and slept with her. He then arranged for her husband, Uriah, to die in battle, after which he married her. See 2 Samuel 11–12.

168. **that word I conceived** His request to be tested.

169. **they do conclude a blessing with him… Shield of David** The conclusion of the third blessing following the *haftarah* (the reading from the Prophets on Sabbaths and festivals).

170. **This rung is my glory…** King David symbolizes the *sefirah* of *Shekhinah*, known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom") and *Kavod* ("Glory").

171. **Why does Scripture compare the righteous to a palm tree?…** See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 5; *Bemidbar* 15; *Midrash Tehillim* 92:11; *Bereshit Rabbah* 40(41):1 (on Genesis 12:17); BT *Ta'anit* 25a–b; *Zohar* 3:16a.

172. **Just as a palm tree rises only male and female…** Palm trees are dioecious: male and female flowers grow on separate trees. Male flowers produce pollen, while female flowers develop into fruit. As early as 2300 B.C.E., Mesopotamian farmers had learned to hang a male flower in a female tree to enhance pollination.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40(41):1; *Midrash Tehillim* 92:11; BT *Pesaḥim* 56a; *Bahir* 117 (172), 139 (198), and Scholem's note, ad loc.; *Zohar* 2:37b, 126a; 3:16a, 135b (*IR*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 128.

173. **a righteous one arises only male and female** Only if he discovers and joins his sexual partner, thereby imitating the union of the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

174. **upon a single righteous one…** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: “Rabbi El’azar son of Shamu’a says, ‘[The world stands] on a single pillar named Righteous One, as is said: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*.’” Cf. *Yoma* 38b. The verse in Proverbs, וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*), which means literally *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*. In Kabbalah the *sefirah* of *Yesod* (“Foundation”) is known as Righteous One, based on this same verse. He constitutes the cosmic pillar.

See *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

175. **world stands on seven supports…** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b. The full verse in Proverbs reads: *Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars*.

176. **all those others endure through the seventh…** *Yesod*, Righteous One (also known as *good*), conveys the emanation of all the *sefirot* from *Binah* and below. Counting from Binah, He is the seventh. See *Zohar* 1:186a.

177. **this support upon which the world stands, who waters the garden…** The river of *Yesod* waters the garden of *Shekhinah*.

178. **Who are they? Souls of the righteous…** Souls are engendered by the union of the divine couple, *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*. Through good deeds and intensive study, righteous souls sustain the world and Torah.

On souls as fruit, see *Bahir* 14 (22); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489, 504; *Zohar* 1:15b, 19a, 33a, 59b–60a, 85b, 115a–b; 2:223b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 51; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69). Cf. Ibn Ezra on Psalms 1:3.

179. **at the moment of midnight the blessed Holy One comes…** See above, note 13.

180. **With all of them…** With all souls, both of those who have died and of those still living.

181. **The world on high needs the arousal of the world below** A general principle of Kabbalah. See *Zohar* 1:35a, 77b, 86b, 88a, 164a, 244a; 2:31b, 265a; 3:92a, 110b.

182. **they all clothe themselves in supernal light…** To enter and experience higher dimensions, the soul is enveloped in a radiant garment. According to *Zohar* 1:224a–b, this garment is woven out of one's virtuous days. Parallels appear in Islamic and Iranian eschatology—and also in Mahayana Buddhism, according to which the Buddha enjoys *sambhogakaya* ("a body of bliss"), generated by merit accrued over aeons.

See *Zohar* 1:7a, 66a, 91a; 2:11a, 150a, 210a–b, 229b, 247a (*Heikh*); 3:70b, 101a, 174b; *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:133); Scholem, *Major Trends*, 77–78; idem, in *Tarbiz* 24 (1955): 290–306; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158–59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 264–65; Nakamura Hajime, in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Eliade, 2:458.

Cf. *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 36; *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:6; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:35; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14; Matthew 22:1–14.

183. **Even those on earth? How?** How can souls of the living ascend and commune with God?

184. **Because at midnight all the truly virtuous awaken…** See Psalms 119:62 and BT *Berakhot* 3b: "Rabbi Shim'on the Ḥasid said, 'There was a harp suspended above [King] David's bed. As soon as midnight arrived, a north wind came and blew upon it, and it played by itself. He immediately arose and engaged in Torah until the break of dawn.'"

In the *Zohar* this legendary custom is expanded into a ritual: all kabbalists are expected to rise at midnight and adorn *Shekhinah* with words of Torah and song in preparation for Her union with *Tif'eret*. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 146–50; above, note 13.

185. **a thread of grace emanates upon them by day…** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: “Resh Lakish said, ‘Whoever engages in Torah at night, the blessed Holy One emanates a thread of grace upon him by day, as is said: *By day* YHVH *directs His grace*. Why? Because *at night His song is with me.*’” *His song* is the song of Torah.

See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 3:13; *Zohar* 1:92a, 178b, 194b; 2:149a.

186. **When the Israelites were confined in their homes…** See Exodus 12:22; *Midrash Tehillim* 113:1.

187. **King David would rise at midnight** See above, note 184.

188. **So David is king forever** According to BT *Berakhot* 57b, “Sleep is one-sixtieth of death.” By rising at midnight and avoiding sleep, David escaped (or deferred) death.

See *Sukkah* 26b; *Zohar* 1:206b–207b. Several witnesses (O2, Cr, *KP, OY*) read: “So King David lives forever.” Cf. the saying cited by Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi in BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 25a (based on Psalms 89:38): “David, King of Israel, lives and endures.”

189. **If King Messiah is of the living, David is his name…** See *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:51; JT *Berakhot* 2:3, 5a; BT *Sanhedrin* 98b; *Zohar* 2:232b; 3:84a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:272, n. 128. According to kabbalistic theory, the Messiah will be a reincarnation of King David.

190. **prefiguring what I intend to do later** When God afflicted the Egyptians with the ten plagues. See above, pp. 22–23 and n. 162.

191. ***YHVH plagued Pharaoh with great plagues…*** The verse reads: YHVH *plagued Pharaoh and his household with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife*.

192. **How did he know?** How did Pharaoh know that Sarai was Abram’s wife?

193. **as with Abimelech…** King of Gerar, when a similar episode took place. Then God told Abimelech

explicitly that Sarah was Abraham's wife. According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 52:5, Abimelech was considered a Gentile prophet.

194. **This is what they said to him: *'Because of Sarai, Abram's wife'*** As angels struck Pharaoh that night, they told him why he was being punished. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40:2; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 5.

195. **He did not converse with him** God did not converse with Pharaoh directly.

196. ***And they sent him off…*** The biblical text is ambiguous, implying either that the guards accompanied and protected Abraham's clan or enforced their expulsion. Rabbi Yitsḥak adopts the first interpretation. See *Targum Onqelos* and Ibn Ezra, ad loc.; BT *Sotah* 46b.

197. **The blessed Holy One said to him** To Pharaoh.

198. ***When Pharaoh sent off the people,* escorting them…** See *Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ, Petiḥta*.

199. **site of the world's greatest magicians** See BT *Qiddushin* 49b: "Ten kabs [measures] of sorcery descended to the world; nine were taken by Egypt [and one by the rest of the world]."

200. ***Negev*** The Negev is the southern region of Canaan and, by extension, *negev* also means "south" in biblical Hebrew. Here it is identified with the warmth of *Ḥesed*, the *sefirah* of Abraham. See above, p. 19 and n. 134.

201. **rungs below, to the depths of which Abraham descended** Having discovered the divine realm, Abraham sought to explore the dark underside of wisdom. His descent to Egypt symbolizes his encounter with the demonic, a crucial stage in his spiritual transformation.

202. **not seduced by them like Adam…** According to Kabbalah, Adam's sin consisted in a misapprehension of the *sefirot*. Deceived by the serpent of false knowledge, he separated *Shekhinah* from the other *sefirot* instead of unifying them through pure contemplation. This tragic separation left *Shekhinah* vulnerable, enabling the demonic powers to

dominate Her. Ever since, She has ruled the world under the apsect of the Tree of Death.

On the nature of Adam and Eve's sin, see *Zohar* 1:35b–36b, 51a-53b, 221a–b; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 231–32, 236, 404–5, n. 105; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:373–76. On the relation between *Shekhinah* and the demonic, see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 189–92; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:376–79.

203. **not seduced like Noah...** Noah tried to repair the damage caused by Adam and reunite *Shekhinah* with the higher *sefirot*. However, intoxicated by the wine of false imagining, he blundered and exposed "the breach of the world" (*Zohar* 1:73a–b). See Recanati on Genesis 9:20–21, 20b.

In the Torah, the final letter of the word אהלה (*oholoh*), *his tent*, is a ה (*he*), rather than the normal masculine possessive suffix ו (*vav*). The suffix ה (*he*) usually denotes the feminine possessive, *her*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 36:4: "Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Simon and Rabbi Ḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shemu'el son of Rav Yitsḥak, '... It is spelled אהלה (*oholah*), *her tent:* inside the tent of his wife.'" In other words, Noah shamed himself in his wife's tent. See Theodor's note, ad loc.

Here similarly, Rabbi Shim'on reads the word as *oholah, her tent*, but he takes this to mean: "the tent of *Shekhinah*," site of Noah's sin. See above, note 130.

204. **supernal rung he had grasped before** Through discovering God and expressing love, Abraham had attained the rung of *Ḥesed* ("Love").

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83b–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*), 98a; 2:36a; 3:14a.

205. **been refined** יצטרף (*Yitstaraf*), "Been tested, refined." Through withstanding the power and temptation of the demonic powers symbolized by Egypt, Abraham was refined.

See *Zohar* 1:83b, 140b, 147b–148b (*ST*); 2:34a, 184a; Tishby, "*Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:457–58.

Abraham's descent to Egypt constituted one of ten tests that he passed. See Jubilees 17:17; 19:8; M *Avot* 5:3; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 33; B, 36; *Midrash Tehillim* 18:25; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 26; above, page 23.

206. **share of the blessed Holy One** Selected by God and confirmed as the incarnation of *Ḥesed*. See Deuteronomy 32:9; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 312.

207. **if the Holy Land had not been given first to Canaan…** See *Zohar* 1:73b.

208. **people… do not care to know… the foundation…** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Rabbi Yose says, 'Woe to creatures, who see yet know not what they see, who stand yet know not upon what they stand!'"

209. **They have established this verse and so have we** See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 3:1; *Zohar* 3:67a–68a.

210. **his soul leaves him and ascends on high** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:9: "It was said in the name of Rabbi Me'ir: 'This soul fills the body, and when a person sleeps she ascends, drawing down life from above.'"

See *Zohar* 1:130a, 200a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:809–14.

211. **pint…** קסטו (*Qistu*), derived from the Greek *xestes*, a measure about the size of a pint. See *Zohar* 1:33a, 121b. Barely enough vitality remains to keep the body alive.

212. **countless rungs upon rungs to climb** re reaching the divine realm.

213. **hooded, hunchbacked, dazzling demons…** קומרין טהירין (*Qumrin tehirin*), malevolent forces who block the ascent of an unworthy soul. The cryptic phrase reappears in *Zohar* 1:109a, 251a (*Hash*).

Qumrin derives from the Greek *qamara*, "arched cover." See *Bereshit Rabbah* 31:11; M *Eruvin* 8:9–10; *Arukh*, s.v. *qmr; Zohar* 1:61b.

Tehirin is a cognate of טיהרא (*tihara*), meaning “brightness, noon.” One class of demons is named טהרי (*tiharei*), “noonday demons.” See Psalms 91:6, and Rashi, ad loc.; *Targum*, Song of Songs 4:6; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 6:24, Deuteronomy 32:24. The Hebrew root טהר (*thr*), “pure,” lends this demonic name a euphemistic tone.

214. **not having been defiled during the day By** sin.

215. **she grasps what is imminent** Since demons possess limited foreknowledge. See Naḥmanides on Leviticus 17:7; *Zohar* 1:130a, 200a; 2:251b (*Heikh*); 3:25a.

216. **disseminating deceptions** Through false dreams. A rabbinic tradition in BT *Berakhot* 55b states that angels convey prophetic dreams, while demons convey false ones. See *Zohar* 1:130a, 200a; 2:130a; 3:25a, 156b.

217. **to her place** To the body.

218. **all those rungs** Of defilement.

219. **on her own path** Corresponding to her virtues and her conduct on earth.

220. **Countenance of Days** The face of God, Ancient of Days, a title deriving from Daniel 7:9: *The Ancient of Days sat, …the hair on His head like clean fleece, His throne—flames of fire*.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 35:2; *Zohar* 1:89b (*ST*), 130a, 188a; 3:132b (*IR*), 201a; *ZḤ* 19a (*MhN*).

221. **to gaze upon the loveliness of the King…** A paraphrase of Psalms 27:4.

222. **shares constantly in the world that is coming** He tastes here and now the richness of eternal life.

עלמא דאתי (*Alma de-atei*), the Aramaic equivalent of the rabbinic Hebrew העולם הבא (*ha-olam ha-ba*), “the world that is coming,” is often understood as referring to the hereafter and is usually translated as “the world to come.” From another point of view, however, “the world that is coming” already exists, occupying another dimension. See *Tanḥuma, Vayiqra* 8: “The wise call it *ha-olam ha-ba* not because it does not exist now, but for us today in this world it is still to

come." Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:8; and Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, 37: "'The world to come' does not succeed 'this world' in time, but exists from eternity as a reality outside and above time, to which the soul ascends."

In Kabbalah "the world that is coming" often refers to *Binah*, the continuous source of emanation, who gives birth to the lower *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 3:290b (*IZ*): "the world that is coming, constantly coming, never ceasing."

Cf. *Bahir* 106 (160); Asher ben David, *Peirush Shelosh Esreh Middot*, in *Kabbalah 2* (1997): 293; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 26 (30); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 375; *Zohar* 1:92a–b.

223. **realm from which she issued** *Shekhinah*, who gives birth to the soul.

224. **her rung** *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the night.

225. רוח **(*ruaḥ*), spirit, ruling by day** *Ruaḥ* seeks its source, *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the day. On the various aspects of the soul, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:684–714.

226. **one rung, two joined as one** These two dimensions of soul, *nefesh* and *ruaḥ*, constitute a unity.

227. נשמה **(*neshamah*), soul breath** The highest dimension of soul.

228. **All those rungs culminate in the mystery of wisdom...** The levels of soul correspond to various *sefirot*, so by contemplating them one discovers aspects of the divine. See *Zohar* 2:142a.

229. **This *neshamah* enters them and they cleave to it** As the *neshamah* enters a human being, it is clothed in the two lower levels: *nefesh* and *ruaḥ*.

230. ***Nefesh*, soul, is lower arousal...** She vitalizes and animates the body.

231. **Afterward she is arrayed** The *nefesh* is adorned and enhanced by virtuous conduct of the limbs of the body.

232. **throne on which settles *ruaḥ*, spirit** *Ruaḥ* constitutes a higher illumination. See *Zohar* 3:70b.

233. **through the arousal of *nefesh* fastened to the body** The holy actions of the body are inspired by the *nefesh*.

234. **there is throne upon throne…** The body constitutes a throne for *nefesh*, *nefesh* for *ruaḥ*, and *ruaḥ* for *neshamah*.

235. **When you contemplate the rungs…** Through contemplating the levels of soul, you discover the mystery of the divine.

236. **candle** בוצינא (*Botsina*), "Lamp," employed by *Targum Onqelos* (e.g., Exodus 27:20; 30:7–8) to render the Hebrew word נר (*ner*), "lamp," and later, "candle."

Wax candles are discussed in a thirteenth-century treatise commissioned by Alfonso X of Castile (1252–1284); see *Libro del saber de astrologia* (University of Madrid MS. 156), fol. 194r. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 85:4; *Tosafot, Shabbat* 20b, s.v. *ad kan; Zohar* 1:50b–51a.

237. **The lower light, which is black, cleaves to the wick…** This dark light cleaving to the wick symbolizes *nefesh*, which cleaves to the body. See the discussion of the colors of the flame in *Zohar* 1:50b–51b, 77b.

238. **white light…** Symbolizing *ruaḥ*, which provides greater illumination.

239. **concealed light—invisible, unknowable** … The halo around the white flame symbolizes *neshamah*, the highest level of soul.

240. **Similarly, the supernal mystery** The light of the candle symbolizes not only the various levels of soul but also their corresponding *sefirot*, namely, *Shekhinah* (black light), *Tif'eret* (white light), and *Binah* (invisible light).

241. ***to YHVH who had appeared to him*** The verse concludes: *He built an altar there to YHVH who had appeared to him*. See above, page 18.

242. **for that rung** For *Shekhinah*, source of *nefesh*.

243. ***continually journeying*** The verse reads: *Abram journeyed, continually journeying toward the Negev*. See above, pages 18–19, 29.

244. **receiving *ruaḥ*** Issuing from a higher *sefirah: Tif'eret*.

245. ***to YHVH*—uncharacterized, referring to *neshamah*...** In this verse, unlike the preceding one, the name *YHVH* is not "characterized" by the phrase *who had appeared to him*. Here it implies the concealed *sefirah, Binah*, who is the source of *neshamah*. See above, page 18.

246. **to be refined...** Through withstanding the power and temptation of the demonic forces symbolized by Egypt, Abraham was refined. See above, note 205.

247. **those dazzling demons** See above, note 213.

248. **returning to his domain *...to the Negev*** To *Ḥesed*, the *sefirah* of Abraham. See above, pages 18–19, 28.

249. **right hand of the world** *Ḥesed* represents the right hand of the sefirotic body.

250. **East** Symbolizing *Tif'eret*.

251. **West** Symbolizing *Shekhinah*.

252. ***with silver*—on the side of the South** Silver symbolizes the light and warmth of *Ḥesed*, identified with the South.

253. ***with gold*—on the side of the North** Gold symbolizes *Gevurah*, identified with the North. See Job 37:22: *From the north gold emerges*.

254. **kissed his hands** A frequent sign of veneration and thanks among the Companions of the *Zohar*.

See 1:133a, 142a, 250b; 2:21b, 23b, 62a, 68a, 87a, 121b, 193b; 3:31a, 57b, 65b, 73b, 119b, 121a, 221b, 296b (*IZ*); *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:2; BT *Berakhot* 8b; Bacher, "Le baisement des mains dans le Zohar."

255. ***He went on his journeys*** The verse continues: *from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and Ai*.

256. **spelled למסעו (*le-massa'o*), *on his journey*** Actually, the Masoretic text reads: למסעיו (*le-massa'av*), *on his journeys*, in the plural. In *Zohar* 1:49b, Rabbi Shim'on highlights the plural form, pointing out that one would expect the singular.

See *Zohar* 1:58b, 84a, 122b (*MhN*); 2:5b (*MhN*), 41b, 176b (*SdTs*); 3:4b, 40b, 68a, 148a, 184a, 202b, 203b, 207a, 254a (RM); *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc., and on Genesis 13:7; Numbers 7:1; 21:34; 23:9.

257. **first rung...** *Shekhinah*, the first rung one grasps on the spiritual ascent. See above, pages 16–18.

258. ***stone dressed at the quarry*** The verse, describing the construction of the Temple, reads: *The House, in its being built, was built of stone dressed at the quarry, so no hammer, ax, or any iron tool was heard*... (1 Kings 6:7). מסע (*Massa*) means both "journey" and "quarry."

259. **אבן שלמה (*even shelomoh*), *stone of Solomon*, indeed!** The word שלמה (*shelemah*), *dressed*, is spelled without a י (*yod*) and can be read: *shelomoh*, *Solomon*. In his triumphant reign, *Shekhinah* (symbolized by the stone) was complete, and She inspired the construction of the Temple.

According to the Midrash, just as the moon does not become full until the fifteenth day of its cycle, so it remained incomplete until the glorious reign of Solomon in the fifteenth generation from Abraham. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 5:12; and *Shemot Rabbah* 15:26: "When Solomon appeared, the disk of the moon became full."

See *Zohar* 1:73b, 74a, 150a, 223a, 225b, 249b; 2:85a; 3:61a; *ZḤ* 83b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 342. In Kabbalah the moon symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

260. ***Massa*, as has been said** *Shekhinah*, who journeys along with Israel, is called by this name. See *Zohar* 1:74a.

261. ***his journeys*—all those rungs...** The plural form also pertains.

262. **arraying his site, joining them in consummate union...** Abraham's journey *from the Negev as far as Bethel* consummates the union of his sefirotic site, *Ḥesed* (symbolized by *the Negev*), with *Shekhinah*. She is called בית אל (*Bet El*), *Bethel*, "House of God," since She receives and houses the flow of blessing from *Ḥesed*, known as *El* ("God"). The union of these two *sefirot* manifests the divine spectrum.

263. **אהלה (*oholoh*), *his tent*—spelled with a ה (*he*)...** Normally the masculine pronominal suffix would be the letter ו (*vav*). To Rabbi Shim'on the ה (*he*), a feminine marker, implies *her tent*, namely, the tent of the divine feminine, *Shekhinah*, who is also known as *Bethel* and *stone of Solomon*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:15; *Minḥat Shai* on Genesis 12:8; *Zohar* 1:73a; above, notes 130, 203.

264. ***to YHVH who had appeared to him*** The verse concludes: *He built an altar there to YHVH who had appeared to him*. Rabbi Shim'on understands this as alluding to the manifestation of *Shekhinah*. See above, pages 18, 32.

265. ***the name of YHVH*** *Shekhinah*, who reveals the divine qualities.

266. **perfect faith** The sefirotic realm culminating in *Shekhinah*.

267. **first rung, as we have said…** *Shekhinah*. See above, page 34.

268. **the South, his allotted share** *Ḥesed*, the *sefirah* of Abraham.

269. **when he ascended** When Abraham ascended further, beyond *Ḥesed*.

270. ***to YHVH*, uncharacterized—supernal world** In this verse, unlike the preceding one, the name *YHVH* is not "characterized" by the phrase *who had appeared to him*. This uncharacterizable dimension of God is the concealed *sefirah* of *Binah*. See above, page 33.

271. ***He went on his journeys from the Negev*** The verse continues: *as far as Bethel*.

272. **from the right side, beginning of the supernal world** From *Ḥesed*, on the right, emanating from the supernal world of *Binah*. To one ascending, *Ḥesed* represents the beginning of that concealed realm. Alternatively, the phrase refers to *Ḥokhmah*, situated directly above *Ḥesed*.

273. **Infinity** אין סוף (*Ein sof*), "There is no end." *Ein Sof* is boundless divinity, the ultimate reality of God beyond all the specific qualities of the individual *sefirot*. Abraham's spiritual journey led him here.

274. **from above to below** Having reached the ultimate, Abraham retraced his steps, descending the sefirotic ladder to *Shekhinah*.

275. **to its site fittingly** To *Shekhinah*, the divine name.

276. **Her** *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the altar.

277. **becoming the actual share of the blessed Holy One** Selected by God and confirmed as the incarnation of *Ḥesed*. See Deuteronomy 32:9; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 312; above, page 29.

278. **Happy are they… *Your people, all of them righteous…*** This verse, appearing frequently in the *Zohar*, reads in full: *Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever—sprout of My planting, work of My hands, that I may be glorified*. Here the concluding phrase indicates that God is crowned with the righteous. In M *Sanhedrin* 10:1, the verse is cited to demonstrate that "all of Israel have a share in the world that is coming."

279. ***Turn to me, be gracious to me…*** The verse continues: *grant Your power to Your servant and save the son of Your maidservant*.

280. **we have established it in various places** See *Midrash Tehillim* 86:8; *Zohar* 3:47a, 84a.

281. **How could David say: *Turn to me, be gracious to me?*** How could he command God so impudently? See *Zohar* 3:84a.

282. **rung with which he was crowned** *Shekhinah*, known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"). David, the ideal king, had grasped this rung and now asked the masculine divinity to turn toward Her. Through Her, David would be delivered.

283. ***Grant Your power*—supernal power** The *sefirah* of *Gevurah* ("Power").

284. **The anonymous king, King Messiah** Identified with *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"). The verse in Samuel reads: *He will grant power to His king and exalt the horn of His* משיח (*mashiaḥ*), *anointed*. *Malkhut*, last of the ten *sefirot*, is annointed by the flow of emanation.

See *Zohar* 1:15b, 29a, 238a; 2:127b; 3:19b.

285. ***to Your servant*—King Messiah…** Again referring to *Malkhut*.

286. **Now, wasn't he the son of Jesse?** Why did David call himself after his mother (*Your maidservant*) rather than Jesse, his father?

287. **one should mention that of which he is certain…** The mother's identity is more certain than the father's. See BT *Shabbat* 66b: "Abbaye said, 'Mother told

me, “All incantations that are repeated several times must contain the name of the patient’s mother.”’”

Cf. *Nazir* 49a; *Gittin* 69a–b; *Zohar* 2:17b (*MhN*); *Yalqut ha-Makhiri*, Psalms 118:22, par. 28; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 115–16,139–40.

288. **we have learned that this is the king…** David was praying for the sake of *Malkhut*, known as “king” and also *Your maidservant*, so he called himself *son of Your maidservant*.

289. **ריב (*riv*), *a quarrel*…spelled רב (*rv*), missing the י (*yod*)** In fact, the Masoretic text includes the י (*yod*). See *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.; above, note 256.

290. **for Lot sought to revert to the idolatry …** The letter י (*yod*) begins and symbolizes the divine name יהוה (*YHVH*). Here its purported lack indicates a lack of divinity, since Lot reverted to the idolatry practiced by the natives of Canaan. Further, the spelling רב (*rv*) implies *rav* (“master”), namely, the Master of the world, over whose identity Abraham and Lot quarreled.

291. **מקדם (*mi-qedem*), *from the east*** Here meaning “eastward.” The phrase recalls *from east of Bethel* (Genesis 12:8; cf. 13:3), where Abraham was then encamped.

292. **מקדמונו (*Mi-qadmono*) From the Primordial One, of the world** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40(41):16 (on Genesis 13:11): “*Lot journeyed* מקדם (*mi-qedem*), *from the east*. He removed himself מקדמונו (*mi-qadmono*), from the Primordial One, of the world, saying, ‘I desire neither Abraham nor his God.’”

293. **and there is written: *When they journeyed mi-qedem, from the east*** In the story of the Tower of Babel. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 38:7: “*When they journeyed* מקדם (*mi-qedem*), *from the east*…. Rabbi El’azar son of Rabbi Shim’on said, ‘They removed themselves מקדמונו (*mi-qadmono*), from the Primordial One, of the world, saying, “We desire neither Him nor His divinity.”’” See above, *Zohar* 1:74b, 76a.

294. **whoever associates with a sinner eventually imitates him…** See *Mekhilta, Amaleq (Yitro)* 1: "One should not associate with a wicked person, even to draw him near to Torah." Cf. M *Avot* 1:7; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 9, 30. However, the opposite view appears frequently—for example, above, page 14.

295. **Jehoshaphat, who joined with Ahab** King Jehoshaphat of Judah allied himself with the wicked King Ahab of Israel by marrying his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter (2 Kings 8:18). The two kings then fought together against Aram. See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 9, citing 2 Chronicles 19:2.

296. **the merit of his ancestors** Jehoshaphat was descended from David.

297. ***Jehoshaphat cried out…*** In the battle against Aram. The verse reads: *When the chariot officers saw Jehoshaphat…, they wheeled around to attack him, and Jehoshaphat cried out and YHVH helped him; God lured them away from him*.

298. **realm of faith** *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the Holy Land.

299. ***YHVH said to Abram, after Lot had parted from him*** The verse continues: *"Raise your eyes now and look from the place where you are, to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west. For all the land that you see I will give to you and to your seed forever."*

300. ***My dove*—Assembly of Israel** See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:14. In rabbinic Hebrew the phrase כנסת ישראל (*Keneset Yisra'el*), "Assembly of Israel," denotes the people of Israel. The midrash on the Song of Songs describes the love affair between the maiden (the earthly community of Israel) and her lover (the Holy One, blessed be He). In the *Zohar, Keneset Yisra'el* can refer to the earthly community but also (often primarily) to *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine counterpart of the people, the aspect of God most

intimately connected with them. The lovers in the Song of Songs are pictured as the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

301. ***In the clefts of the rock*—Jerusalem** … See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:14: "Rabbi Tanḥuma said, '… I interpret according to the view of the Rabbis:… *My dove, in the clefts of the rock*—for they were hidden in the secrecy of the House of Eternity [the Temple].'"

302. **Holy of Holies, heart of the whole world** See *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 10: "The land of Israel sits in the center of the world, Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel, the Temple in the center of Jerusalem, the nave in the center of the Temple, the ark in the center of the nave, and in front of the ark the Rock of Foundation, from which the world was founded."

See Ibn Ezra on Genesis 1:2; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 18:25; *Zohar* 2:157a, 184b, 193a; 3:65b, 161b. Cf. *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 16.

303. **there *Shekhinah* concealed Herself…** *Shekhinah* concealed Herself within the Holy of Holies for Her husband, *Tif'eret*. See *Zohar* 1:116a; 2:170b–171a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 359.

304. **in the secrecy of the steep** A paraphrase of *in the covert of the cliff*, referring to the Holy of Holies.

305. **when She is in exile** *Shekhinah* accompanies Israel in exile. See BT *Megillah* 29a: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai says, 'Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them… When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them…. And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them.'" See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 14.

306. **throne…** Symbolizing *Shekhinah*.

307. **They performed the rite, piercing the atmospheric belts of the world…** When the Temple stood, Israel performed sacrificial rites. Their pure

intention ascended through all the levels of Heaven, stimulating the union of *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah* (who is symbolized by "the land"). Ultimately all the *sefirot* joined, ascending together to *Ein Sof*.

Maimonides had relativized the importance of the sacrificial offerings, explaining them away as a concession to the primitive nature of ancient Israel. The *Zohar* counters by emphasizing their vital role in unifying and sustaining the cosmos. See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:32; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:878–90.

On cultivating the land as a metaphor for offering sacrifices and observing the commandments, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 41; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 2:15; *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:5; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 21; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 12; *Battei Midrashot*, 2:91; *Zohar* 1:27a (*TZ*), 57b, 122a, 141b, 199b; 2:165b.

308. **being nourished only by drippings** See BT *Ta'anit* 10a: "The land of Israel drinks water directly from the rain, while the rest of the world drinks of the drippings." See *Zohar* 1:108b; 2:152b; 3:209b; Naḥmanides on Deuteronomy 11:10.

Here Rabbi Abba teaches that when Israel dwelled in the land, they imbibed the flow of emanation directly from *Shekhinah*, while the other nations were nourished merely by the residue and were relatively powerless.

309. **before Israel defiled the land** Through sin.

310. **they thrust *Shekhinah* from Her site, as it were** Sin displaces the Divine Presence. See BT *Ḥagigah* 16a: "Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'Whoever sins secretly, it is as if he thrusts away the feet of *Shekhinah*.'" Cf. *Zohar* 1:57a–b, 61a, 69a.

See Isaiah 50:1: *Because of your transgressions your mother was divorced*. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:7: "Rabbi Abba son of Kahana said, 'The essence of *Shekhinah* was in the lower realms. As soon as Adam sinned, it withdrew to the first heaven.'" See *Zohar* 1:53b.

311. **She was drawn toward another place** Toward the demonic realm, symbolized by foreign lands.

312. **The land of Israel is not ruled by any official…** According to rabbinic tradition, Israel is ruled directly by God, while the other seventy nations of the world are governed by angels or heavenly princes appointed by Him.

See Daniel 10:20; Septuagint, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; Jubilees 15:31–32; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 11:8, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; *Tanḥuma, Re'eh* 8; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 9:19; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 24; BT *Ketubbot* 110b; *Zohar* 1:46b, 61a, 108b; 2:33a, 151b; 3:298b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:204–5, n. 91.

See BT *Ta'anit* 10a: "The land of Israel is watered by the blessed Holy One Himself, while the rest of the world is watered by a messenger."

313. **they attracted alien gods to *Shekhinah*, interlinking them…** By offering incense to alien gods, Israel rejected the true God and ruined the union of the divine couple. This left *Shekhinah* vulnerable to the alien powers, who drew close to Her and imbibed Her nourishment.

314. **incense constitutes a nexible nexus** לאתקטרא קטרת קטורא הוא (*Qetoret qittura hu le-itqattara*), "Incense is a link to be linked." The *Zohar* often plays on the root קטר (*qtr*), which in Hebrew forms the basis of קטרת (*qetoret*) and in Aramaic means "to tie, link, connect." Through incense offered to God, the *sefirot* are linked, while incense offered to idols links *Shekhinah* with the demonic.

315. **prophets have ceased** See *Tosefta, Sotah* 13:3: "Once the last [biblical] prophets—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—died, the Holy Spirit ceased from Israel."

Cf. JT *Sotah* 9:13, 24b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 8:8.

316. **those supernal rungs** The *sefirot*.

317. **never venturing outside the house to reveal Herself** Never leaving the Temple or the land of Israel.

318. **That is why Jonah fled outside the Holy Land…** See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1: “Rabbi El’azar son of Tsadok said, ‘…*Shekhinah* is not revealed outside the land [of Israel], for it is said: *Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of YHVH* (Jonah 1:3). Was he fleeing *from the presence of YHVH*? Has it not already been said: *Where can I go from Your spirit?* [*Where can I flee from Your presence?*] *If I ascend to heaven, You are there*. [*If I make my bed in Sheol, here You are*]…(Psalms 139:7–8). Rather, Jonah said, “I will go outside the land, where *Shekhinah* is not revealed.”’”

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 10; *Zohar* 1:121a; 2:170b.

319. ***Happening it happened*** The verse continues: *that the word of YHVH came to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Kevar*. The opening phrase, היה היה (*Hayoh hayah*), *Happening it happened*, combines the infinitive and finite forms of the verb “to be.”

320. **what happened had never happened before…** The unusual phrase, *happening it happened*, implies a unique event. When *Shekhinah* appeared to Ezekiel in Babylon, it was the first time She had appeared outside the land of Israel since the Temple was built, but this was an emergency: the stunned people in exile had to be comforted and reassured.

See *Zohar* 1:149a; 2:2a–b, 5a, 82a; Moses de León, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 58–59. Cf. *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1; BT *Mo’ed Qatan* 25a.

321. **River of Already…** The prophet Ezekiel experienced his vision at the River Kevar, a stream near Nippur in Babylon. In Hebrew, though, the word כבר (*kevar*) means “already” or “long ago,” so Rabbi Abba sees here an allusion to the primordial river issuing from Eden.

See *Re’uyyot Yeḥezqel*, ed. Gruenwald, in *Temirin* 1 (1972): 111–14; Matt, *Essential Kabbalah*, 126, 205; *Zohar* 1:6b, 149a–b.

On the relation between prophetic revelation and the purity of water, see *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1 (citing Daniel 8:2; 10:4; Ezekiel 1:3); Idel, in *Sinai* 86 (1979): 1–7.

322. ***A river issues from Eden to water the garden…*** The river of emanation flows from the highest *sefirot* to water the garden of *Shekhinah*.

323. **This is one of them** The River Kevar is identified with the Euphrates, one of the four riverheads issuing from the primordial river of Eden. See Genesis 2:14; *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:3, in the name of Rabbi Yudan.

324. **She does not reveal Herself** *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, does not reveal Herself outside the land of Israel.

325. **to revert to his repulsiveness** To worship idolatry. See above, page 37.

326. **Holy Spirit** Often identified with *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:67a; 2:97b, 238b; 3:61a.

327. **As soon as Lot parted from him…** See *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 10: "*Shekhinah* does not dwell in a house containing images of idolatry…. You should realize that as long as Abraham cleaved to Lot, the blessed Holy One was not revealed to him. As soon as he parted from him, He was revealed to him. How do we know? Rabbi El'azar son of Pedat said in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Zimra, 'As is said: *YHVH said to Abram*. When? *After Lot had parted from him.*'"

328. **As soon as he parted from him** As soon as Lot parted from Abraham.

329. **Where you cleaved at first…** The rung of *Shekhinah*. See above, pages 16–18, 32–34.

330. ***To the north, to the south…*** The four directions symbolize, respectively, *Gevurah, Ḥesed, Tif'eret*, and *Shekhinah*.

331. ***Negev*** The southern region of Canaan, or "south," symbolizing *Ḥesed*, Abraham's *sefirah*. See above, pages 18–19, 29.

332. **The first rung that was revealed to him…** *Shekhinah*. See above, note 329.

333. **for this rung comprises all those rungs, all seen within it** All the *sefirot* manifest in *Shekhinah*.

334. **He rose at night to engage in Torah…** On this practice, see above, pages 2–3, 26.

335. **In a village castle…** בקיסטרא דקוסטא (*Be-qistera de-qusta*). *Qistera* derives from the Latin *castrum* (pl. *castra*), "castle, fortress." See *Zohar* 1:29a, 30a, 62a (*Tos*). The word *qusta* means "village" in BT *Ta'anit* 24a; see Rashi, ad loc. To Rabbi El'azar, about to engage in Torah, the simple inn is transformed into a royal dwelling.

336. ***Like an apple tree*—the blessed Holy One…** The midrash on Song of Songs interprets the biblical poem as a love song between God (the blessed Holy One) and the Assembly of Israel. From a kabbalistic perspective, "Assembly of Israel" signifies not only the people Israel but also their divine counterpart, *Shekhinah*, so the song celebrates not only human-divine love but also the love between *Shekhinah* and *Tif'eret*, known as the blessed Holy One. This verse is sung by Her to Him.

Tif'eret is symbolized by the apple because He combines the white of the pulp, the red of the skin, and the green of the leaves, representing the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:3; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489; *Zohar* 3:286b.

337. **other officials** Angelic powers who rule over the nations of the world. See above, note 312.

338. **From the day Abraham came into the world…** When Abraham appeared in the world, *Shekhinah* was stimulated by his love of God; ever since She has delighted in the blessed Holy One.

339. **Isaac, holy fruit** A divine soul born to Abraham and Sarah.

340. **Jacob** Culmination of the patriarchs, symbolizing *Tif'eret*.

341. **Joseph the Righteous, who generates holy fruit in the world** Joseph symbolizes *Yesod*, who fructifies *Shekhinah*, generating souls.

Joseph is known as "the Righteous" because he resisted the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. See BT *Yoma* 35b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 93:7; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, nispaḥim*, 460; cf. *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 5; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 38, which cite Amos 2:6.

Yesod is known as Righteous, based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse, which literally means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

342. ***These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph…*** Rabbi El'azar ends his citation of the verse here, implying that Joseph, symbolizing *Yesod*, embodies all twelve tribes. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:6; *Zohar* 1:21b, 158a.

343. **So Israel is named after Ephraim…** All twelve tribes of Israel are named after Ephraim, son of Joseph. See *Aggadat Bereshit* 5:3, citing Jeremiah 31:8.

344. **Abraham, who resembles an apple emitting fragrance** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:2: "Rabbi Berekhiah opened, *'The scent of your oils is fragrant* (Song of Songs 1:3). What did Abraham resemble? A flask of balsam tightly covered and lying in a corner, so its fragrance did not spread. As soon as it was moved, its fragrance spread. Similarly, the blessed Holy One said to Abraham, "Move yourself from place to place, so your name will be enhanced in the world. *Go you forth* (Genesis 12:1)."'"

345. **Because no one else on earth…** In his generation.

346. **But it is written: *and the souls they had made in Haran*!** In this verse, the word נפש (*nefesh*), *souls*, is usually understood as *persons*, and the word עשו (*asu*), *made*, is understood as *acquired*, but Rabbi Ḥizkiyah reads

them literally, following midrashic tradition. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:14: "*And the souls they had made in Haran*. Rabbi El'azar said in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Zimra, 'If all the nations assembled to create a single mosquito, they could not cast a soul into it, yet you say: *and the souls they had made*?! Rather, these are converts. Then the verse should read: [*and the souls*] *they had converted*. Why *they had made*? To teach you that whoever draws a gentile near is as though he created him.' Then the verse should read: *he* [Abraham] *had made*. Why *they had made*? Rabbi Ḥunya said, 'Abraham converted the men, and Sarah the women.'"

Here Rabbi Ḥizkiyah's point is that Abraham was not the only one who had discovered true faith.

See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 32; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 12; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 12; B, 26; above, page 12.

347. **They had not yet attained the supernal rungs...** They had not climbed the sefirotic ladder as had Abraham. See above, pages 18–19, 28–36.

348. **Later he told him** Rabbi El'azar told Rabbi Ḥizkiyah.

349. **all three of them constituted the patriarchs of the world** The triad of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob symbolize the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 47:6: "Resh Lakish said, 'The patriarchs themselves constitute the [divine] Chariot.'" When all three had appeared, harmony reigned and Abraham was fulfilled.

350. **the blessed Holy One ... the blessed Holy One ... the blessed Holy One** According to this view, all three phrases spoken by *Shekhinah* refer to Her partner, *Tif'eret*, known as the blessed Holy One. For a similar string of identifications with "the blessed Holy One," see *Vayiqra Rabbah* 30:9. Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:3.

351. ***We will do and we will listen*** With these words Israel demonstrated true faith by committing themselves to

fulfill and enact God's word even before hearing the details. See BT *Shabbat* 88a; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:3.

352. ***And his fruit is sweet to my mouth*—words of Torah...** See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 2:3.

353. ***His fruit is sweet to my mouth*—souls of the righteous...** According to this interpretation, *Shekhinah* sings of the souls born from Her union with *Tif'eret*.

On souls as fruit, see *Bahir* 14 (22); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489, 504; *Zohar* 1:15b, 19a, 33a, 59b–60a, 82b, 115a–b; 2:223b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 51; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69). Cf. Ibn Ezra on Psalms 1:3.

354. **All souls...are all one...they all separate...** Human souls exist originally without gender distinction. On their journey toward the world, they become male and female but are still united androgynously until they enter an individual male or female body. See the rabbinic tradition on the original nature of Adam (*Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1): "Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El'azar said, 'When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him androgynous, as is said: *Male and female He created them* (Genesis 1:27).' Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥman said, 'When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him with two faces. Then He sawed him and gave him two backs, one on this side and one on that."

See Plato, *Symposium* 189d–191d; BT *Berakhot* 61a; *Eruvin* 18a; *Zohar* 1:13b, 47a, 91b, 108a; 2:55a, 246a (*Heikh*); 3:43a–b, 283b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1355–56; Matt, *Zohar*, 217.

355. **Desire of female for male...desire of male for female...** The desire of *Shekhinah* for *Tif'eret* generates the feminine aspect of the soul, while His desire for Her generates the masculine aspect. See *Zohar* 1:182a, 209a.

356. **later the blessed Holy One couples them...** Ideally God arranges marriages between two souls who

were originally paired. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:4, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Simon: “A matron asked Rabbi Yose, ‘In how many days did the blessed Holy One create His world?’ He replied, ‘In six days.’ ‘Since then what has He been doing?’ He replied, ‘He sits and matches couples: this man for that woman, this woman for that man.’ She said, ‘If that seems difficult, I can do it!’ She went and matched [her slaves], giving this woman to that man, and this man to that woman. After a while, those who had been matched starting beating one another. This woman said, ‘I don’t want that man!’ This man said, ‘I don’t want that woman!’ He [Rabbi Yose] said to her [the matron], ‘If it seems easy to you, it is as difficult for the blessed Holy One as splitting the Red Sea!’”

See BT *Sotah* 2a; and *Mo’ed Qatan* 18b: “Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shemu’el, ‘Every single day a heavenly echo issues, proclaiming: “The daughter of so-and-so for so-and-so!”’” Cf. *Zohar* 1:89a, 90b, 91b; 2:101a.

357. **Happy is the human who acts virtuously…** Such a person is rewarded by being reunited with his original soul mate. See BT *Sotah* 2a: “When Resh Lakish opened the discussion of the straying wife, he said as follows: ‘A man is only coupled with a woman according to his deeds.’”

358. **he becomes a complete, fitting human being** Regaining androgynous oneness. See *Zohar* 3:7a, 81a–b.

359. ***His fruit*** מתוק **(*matoq*), *is sweet*…—**תקונא **(*tiqquna*), a restoration…** *Shekhinah* praises the sweetness of the soul, generated through Her union with *Tif’eret*. When a righteous human being regains his soul mate, their union below stimulates the union of the divine couple, ensuring a flow of blessing to the world.

360. **The blessed Holy One says to Assembly of Israel** *Tif’eret* says to *Shekhinah*. On this name of *Shekhinah*, see above, note 300.

361. ***From Me,* literally, *your fruit appears*** See *Zohar* 1:115b; 2:223b.

362. **Afterward, the two of them appear in the world** The male and female souls are embodied separately.

363. ***From Me your fruit appears*** According to this view, the verse is spoken by *Shekhinah*.

364. ***In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar…*** This chapter of Genesis describes a battle between a confederacy of four eastern kings versus five Canaanite vassals who revolted against them. In the course of the action, Lot (Abram's nephew) is taken captive by the eastern confederacy. When Abram hears the news, he musters an armed force, routs the attackers, and rescues his nephew.

365. ***Who aroused from the East, calling righteousness to follow him?*** The verse continues: *He delivers up nations to him and tramples kings*.

366. **This verse has been established by the Companions** In various rabbinic sources, the verse is applied to Abraham, who was aroused by God from the East (Mesopotamia). See *Bereshit Rabbah* 42(43):3 (on Genesis 14:15); BT *Bava Batra* 15a.

367. **The blessed Holy One fashioned seven expanses above** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Resh Lakish said, 'There are seven רקיעים (*reqi'im*), heavens [or: expanses, firmaments].'" Here the expanses are the *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:32b; 2:56b.

368. **supernal expanse, concealed, above them…** *Binah*, the Divine Mother, source of the seven lower *sefirot*.

369. **susceptible to questioning yet unknown… called מי (*Mi*), Who?** A spiritual seeker may inquire about *Binah*, but such questions do not yield ordinary answers. The identity of the divine is discovered only in a realm beyond words. The mystical name "Who" becomes a focus of meditation, as question turns into quest. See Shim'on Lavi,

KP, 1:91a: “Concerning everything that cannot be grasped, its question constitutes its answer.”

See *Zohar* 1:1b, 29b–30a, 45b, 237b; 2:126b–127a, 138a, 139b, 226a, 231b.

370. ***From the womb of* מי (*mi*), *whom, emerged the ice…*** From the womb of *Binah* emerged *Shekhinah*, whose frozen sea thaws through the warmth of *Ḥesed*, flowing love. See *Zohar* 1:29b.

371. **Below is an expanse lower than them all, not shining** *Shekhinah*, who reflects the light of the other *sefirot* but has no light of Her own.

372. **expanse above them joins it** *Binah*, the supernal expanse, joins *Shekhinah*.

373. **These two letters it absorbs and is called ים (*Yam*), Sea…** *Shekhinah* absorbs the letters of *Binah:* מי (*Mi*), “Who,” and reflects them in reverse: ים (*Yam*), “Sea.” See *Zohar* 1:30a.

374. **all those other expanses turn into streams…** The *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod* transmit the flow of emanation from *Binah* to *Shekhinah*.

375. **fruit and fish, according to their species** Various souls and angels. On souls as fruit, see above, note 353. On angels as fish, see *Zohar* 2:30b.

376. ***Who aroused from the East*—Abraham** *Binah*, known as *Who*, emanated the lower *sefirot* beginning with *Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham. As indicated above (note 366), midrashic tradition applies this verse to Abraham, who was aroused by God from the East.

377. ***Calling righteousness to follow him…*** The emanation of the *sefirot* culminates in *Shekhinah*, known as *righteousness* and Sea.

378. **Who? This lowest expanse…who wreaks vengeance…** Who delivered up the four kings to Abraham (as related in Genesis 14)? It was *Shekhinah*, the attribute of Judgment.

379. **On this David prided himself…** King David symbolizes *Shekhinah*, known as *Malkhut* (“Kingdom”), and in this verse he celebrates Her power.

380. **nations pursued by Abraham** As related in Genesis 14:14–15. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 42(43):3 (on Genesis 14:15).

381. **Kings appointed over them above** According to rabbinic tradition, the seventy nations of the world are governed by seventy angels or heavenly princes appointed by God.

See Daniel 10:20; Septuagint, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; Jubilees 15:31–32; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 11:8, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; *Tanḥuma, Re’eh* 8; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 9:19; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 24; *Zohar* 1:46b, 108b; 3:298b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:204–5, n. 91.

382. **when the blessed Holy One executes judgment against a nation…** See *Shemot Rabbah* 21:5: “Rabbi El’azar son of Pedat said, ‘The blessed Holy One does not overthrow a nation until He first overthrows their prince.” Cf. *Mekhilta, Shirta* 2; and Isaiah 24:21: *On that day YHVH will punish the host of heaven in heaven and the kings of earth on earth*.

383. **Abraham pursued them and the blessed Holy One…** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 1:4: “Rabbi Isaac said, ‘Can anyone pursue those already killed, as is written: *He smote them and pursued them as far as Hobah* (Genesis 14:15)? Rather this teaches that the blessed Holy One slew and Abraham pursued.’” Cf. Margaliot’s edition and note; *Bereshit Rabbah* 42(43):3 (on Genesis 14:15).

384. **the blessed Holy One, called *Shalom*, Peace** See BT *Shabbat* 10b: “The [divine] Name itself is called Peace, as is written: *He called it ‘YHVH is peace’* (Judges 6:24).” In Kabbalah this name suits the blessed Holy One (*Tif’eret*), who harmonizes the polar opposites *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*. See *Zohar* 3:10b, 176a–b.

385. **Would you imagine that Abraham was traveling in the clouds…?** Obviously he traveled on foot. Why does the verse need to specify *feet*?

386. **Rather, *By way of his feet he did not travel…*** *His* and *he* refer to God, who manifested and traveled Himself, not through angels.

387. ***On that day His feet will stand…*** The verse continues: *on the Mount of Olives*.

388. **When the blessed Holy One aroused the world…** The battle of the kings (Genesis 14) was instigated by God to stimulate Abraham to act virtuously.

389. **because Jacob was destined to issue from him…** According to this interpretation, the verse means *Who* (*Binah*) *aroused* Abraham *from* (i.e., because of) *the East* (Jacob, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, identified with *East*).

390. ***Righteousness calling him*…for the blessed Holy One called him…** *Shekhinah*, known as *Righteousness*, designated Jacob from the beginning.

391. ***the people who follow you*** Various witnesses cite instead the similar phrase in 1 Kings 20:10.

392. ***Who aroused from the East*, for there light begins to radiate** Apparently playing with the homonyms העיר (*he'ir*), *aroused*, and האיר (*he'ir*), *radiated*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 42(43):3 (on Genesis 14:15).

393. **potency of the light of the South issues from the East** The potency of *Ḥesed* (symbolized by South) manifests through *Tif'eret* (symbolized by East).

394. ***Who aroused* that light of the South. *From the East…*** Understanding the verse to mean *Who* (*Binah*, the supernal expanse) *aroused* the light of the South (*Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham) *from the East* (through *Tif'eret*).

395. ***Righteousness calling him to follow him*—West…** *Shekhinah*, known as *Righteousness* and symbolized by West, calls constantly to Her partner, *Tif'eret*, stimulating Him *to follow* Her, to unite with Her. אלהים (*Elohim*) is one of the names of *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:77b; 2:256b (*Heikh*).

396. **from Him He receives power…** From *Tif'eret*, *Shekhinah* receives power.

397. **Abraham, who absorbed arousal…solely from the East…** For various versions of this legend, see Apocalypse of Abraham, 7; *Ma'aseh Avraham* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:118); *Sefer ha-Yashar, Noaḥ*, 68; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 12:1; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:210, n. 16.

398. **Do not read: בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*…** According to Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah (*Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9), בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*, is an anagram of באברהם (*be-Avraham*), "through Abraham," indicating that the world was created for his sake. See *Zohar* 1:3b, 91b, 93a, 105b, 128b, 154b, 230b; 3:117a.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Rabbi El'azar son of Shamu'a says, '[The world stands] upon a single pillar named Righteous One, as is said: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world* (Proverbs 10:25).'"

399. **descendants who will destroy the Temple…** In rabbinic literature Rome is referred to as Esau, Abraham's grandson.

400. **Immediately the world stabilized for his sake** Jacob's virtuous descendants are contrasted with Abraham's son (Ishmael) and Isaac's son (Esau) in *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 312; *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:11. See *Zohar* 1:118b, 119b, 148a, 154b.

401. **as is written: *Declaring what is right*** Referring to the "uprightness" of Jacob's sons.

402. **all diverge in meaning** See *Zohar* 1:16b, 157a, 234b, 249a; 2:25b, 83a; 3:50b, 161a, 132b–133a (*IR*), 293a (*IZ*).

403. ***Vaydabber, He spoke*… an outer rung… *righteousness*** This verb alludes to *Shekhinah*, known as *righteousness*. As the last *sefirah*, She is symbolized by fully articulated divine speech.

404. ***Va-yagged, He declared…*** **controlling speech…** *Tif'eret*, who precedes and controls *Shekhinah*.

405. **Supernal rung inhabited by Jacob…*You established what is right*** Jacob attained the rung of *Tif'eret*, who constitutes the mediating principle (*what is right*) between the polar opposites *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*. See *Zohar* 2:51b.

406. **But look…ויגד (*Va-yagged*), *He declared, to you His covenant*** In this verse, the verb alludes to *Yesod*, the divine phallus symbolized by the covenant of circumcision. The noun גיד (*gid*), "sinew," serves as a rabbinic euphemism for "phallus." See M *Yevamot* 8:2.

407. **That rung controls the lower one: *speaking righteousness*** *Yesod* also controls *Shekhinah*, known as divine speech and *righteousness*.

408. **דבר (*davar*), word** *Shekhinah*, divine speech.

409. **filled with everything, a supernal rung** *Shekhinah* contains the entire flow of emanation from the higher *sefirot*.

410. **Your mnemonic: *It is not an empty word for you*** *Shekhinah*, the divine word, is full. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:14, in the name of Rabbi Yishma'el: "*It is not an empty word* מכם (*mi-kem*), *for you*, and if it is empty, it is *mi-kem*, from you—because of you, because you do not know how to interpet." See *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 32:47; JT *Pe'ah* 1:1, 15b.

411. **his father-in-law** See Vol. 1, p. 30, n. 205.

412. **arousal above depends on desire below** A general principle of Kabbalah. See *Zohar* 1:35a, 77b, 82b, 88a, 164a, 244a; 2:31b, 265a; 3:92a, 110b.

413. **אלהים (*Elohim*), *O God, do not be silent*…This is arousal below** *Shekhinah*, known by the divine name *Elohim*, stimulates the higher *sefirot*.

414. **David exclaimed** King David addresses his corresponding *sefirah: Shekhinah*, known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom").

415. **Right** *Ḥesed*, on the right side of the sefirotic tree.

416. **When all those kings joined forces to wage war against Abraham** See Genesis 14.

417. **he resembled Abraham** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40(41):6 (on Genesis 13:8).

418. **that entire war was fought over him…** The idolatrous kings sought to defeat Abraham. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 41(42):3, 7 (on Genesis 14:1, 7); *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 14:7; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 27.

419. **to enhance Abraham's name on earth and draw him to His service** Abraham's miraculous victory over the kings made him famous and drew him closer to God.

420. ***Elohim, do not be silent!*—until all linked with Abraham** *Shekhinah*, known as *Elohim*, began to arouse the higher *sefirot* until She was fully joined with *Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham.

421. ***Melchizedek, king of Salem*** The verse continues: *brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High*.

422. **Rabbi Shim'on opened** As *KP* indicates, this passage (86b–87a) interrupts the story of the journey of Rabbi El'azar. The Sulzbach edition of the *Zohar* places Rabbi Shim'on's teaching at the conclusion of the story.

423. **lamp of impenetrable darkness** בוצינא דקרדינותא (*Botsina de-qardinuta*). See Vol. 1, pp. 107–8, and n. 4 there; and the wealth of material collected and analyzed by Liebes, *Peraqim*, 145–51, 161–64. קרדינותא (*Qardinuta*) recalls a phrase in BT *Pesaḥim* 7a: חיטי קורדניתא (*ḥittei qurdanaita*), "wheat from Kurdistan," which, according to Rashi, is very hard. In *Zohar* 1:15a, several witnesses record the variants קדרינותא (*qadrinuta*) or קדרוניתא (*qadrunita*), "darkness." See *ZḤ* 2a, where קרדנותא דסיהרא (*qardenuta de-sihara*) means "eclipse of the moon," corresponding to the Hebrew קדרות הירח (*qadrut ha-yareaḥ*), "darkening of the moon."

The lamp (or "spark") is so potently brilliant that it overwhelms comprehension. Many mystics convey similar paradoxical images: "a ray of divine darkness" (Dionysius, *Mystical Theology* 1:1); "the luminous darkness" (Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2:163); "the black light" (Iranian Sufism; see Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, 99–120). Prior to the *Zohar*, Azriel of Gerona and the author of *Ma'yan ha-Ḥokhmah* mention "the light darkened from shining." See Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 59–60, 158–59; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 336. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:59: "We are dazzled by His beauty, and He is hidden from us because of the intensity with which He becomes manifest, just as the sun is hidden to eyes too weak to apprehend it."

Here the blinding light is the impulse of emanation flashing from *Ein Sof* and proceeding to delineate the various *sefirot*. See *ZḤ* 57d–58a (*QhM*); *Zohar* 1:15a, 18b, 172a; 2:133b, 177a, 233a, 254b, 260a; 3:48b–49a, 135b, 139a (*IR*), 292b, 295a–b (*IZ*).

424. **He generated a single drop and joined them as one…** The drop, symbolizing the flow of *Ḥesed*, is joined with the flame, symbolizing the fire of *Gevurah*. By balancing the qualities of love and rigor, God creates the world. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15, and 4:7: "*God called the expanse* שמים (*shamayim*), *Heaven* (Genesis 1:8). Rav said, 'אש ומים (*Esh u-mayim*), Fire and water.' Rabbi Abba son of Kahana said in the name of Rav, 'The blessed Holy One took fire and water and intermingled them, and from them heaven was made.'"

425. **Between them issued רוח שלים (*ruaḥ shelim*), perfect spirit…** *Tif'eret*, symbolized by *ruaḥ* ("spirit" or "air"), harmonizes the polar opposites *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, symbolized by fire and water. See above, page 2.

426. **the rung stabilized** *Tif'eret*, the central *sefirah*, stabilized—and with it, the entire sefirotic ladder.

427. **ה (*He*) was crowned with ו (*vav*), ו (*vav*) with ה (*he*)...** The last three letters of the divine name יהוה (*YHVH*) symbolize *Binah, Tif'eret*, and *Shekhinah*. Here *Binah* is crowned with *Tif'eret*, and *Tif'eret* with *Shekhinah* (or alternatively, *Shekhinah* is crowned with *Tif'eret*, and *Tif'eret* with *Binah*). Then *Shekhinah* ascends toward *Binah*.

428. ***Melchizedek*, מלך שלם (*melekh shalem*), *king of Salem*...** *Melchizedek* symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom") and *Tsedeq* ("Righteousness"). Now She is *shalem* ("perfect, complete"), united with the higher *sefirot*, empowered by them and reigning over the world. Similarly, the *tabernacle* referred to by Rabbi Shim'on (above, page 54) symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is now *in Salem*, in a state of perfection.

429. **On Yom Kippur, when all faces beam** On this holiest of days, the *sefirot* unite in joy. See *Zohar* 3:69a–b.

430. **last world** *Shekhinah*, last of the ten *sefirot*.

431. **supernal world** *Binah*, the Divine Mother.

432. **Even the lower world constitutes all...** Although *Shekhinah* is the last of the ten *sefirot*, She includes them all.

433. ***Brought out bread and wine*** The verse reads: *Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High*.

434. **She contains both of these** *Shekhinah* includes both forms of emanation, the second more subtle and refined.

435. **world serving world** *Shekhinah* is the priest who serves *Binah, God Most High*. See *Zohar* 2:152a.

436. ***He was priest*—the Right...** According to this interpretation, *priest* symbolizes *Ḥesed*, on the right, who derives from *Binah, God Most High*.

437. **So the priest must bless the world** As *Ḥesed* conveys blessing from *Binah* to the worlds below, so the human priest conveys blessing to the world.

438. **blessings absorbed by this lower world…High Priest** The blessings absorbed by *Shekhinah* when She is joined with *Ḥesed*.

439. ***he blessed him, saying, 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High*** The verse continues: *Possessor of Heaven and Earth!'* Rabbi Shim'on apparently takes the verse to mean that *Binah* blesses *Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abram, who conveys the flow of blessing to *Shekhinah*. For other interpretations, see *KP* and Galante.

440. **priest below must cluster clusters…** The human priest must stimulate the union of the *sefirot*, linking *Shekhinah* with *Ḥesed* on the right, so that She joins with *Binah*, and so that this world joins the upper world.

441. **Mystery of the word: instituting blessings** The wording of the verse in Genesis prefigures the traditional formula of a blessing: "Blessed are You, *YHVH* our God, King of the world…"

442. ***He blessed him*, from below** *Melchizedek*, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, blessed Abraham, symbolizing the higher *sefirah: Ḥesed*.

443. ***Blessed be God Most High*…from above to below** Here the blessing flows from *Binah, God Most High*, down toward *Shekhinah* and the lower worlds.

444. ***tenth*…the site where a cluster clusters below** *Shekhinah*, last of the ten *sefirot* and the site where they all join. According to the plain meaning of Genesis, the subject is Abraham, who gives a tenth to Melchizedek, but here it is unclear exactly how Rabbi Shim'on interprets the pronouns *he* and *him*. See *KP;* Galante; *MM;* below, page 60; *ZḤ* 25a (*MhN*); Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, Genesis 14:20, n. 133.

445. **Why is it not written: *A psalm of David*, or *Of David, a psalm*?** Why the unusual, abbreviated title: *Of David*?

See *Zohar* 1:123b, 239a. On the distinction between the two complete titles, see BT *Pesaḥim* 117a; *Midrash Tehillim*

24:1; Rashi on Psalms 23:1; Jacob bar Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 92; Todros Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 48; *Zohar* 1:39b, 67a; 2:50a, 140a, 170a.

446. **on behalf of his rung…** In this psalm, King David sang on behalf of *Shekhinah*, whom he symbolizes. She is known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"). See below, page 84.

In thirteenth-century Castile, King Alfonso X (1252–1284) also sang to the idealized feminine, imagining himself as troubadour of the Virgin Mary. In his *Cantigas de Santa María* (1:102, 19–26) he chants: "I wish today to be her Troubadour, and I beg that she will desire me for her Troubadour and will want to receive my song."

447. ***To You, YHVH*—above** *Tif'eret*, known by this divine name.

448. **Who is *my soul*? David, first rung…** *Shekhinah*, first rung on the ascending sefirotic ladder.

449. ***I lift up*—I raise, as is said…** David sought to raise *Shekhinah* and unite Her with the triad of *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, symbolized by *the mountains*. See *Zohar* 2:110a.

450. ***Bless* את יהוה (*et YHVH*), *O my soul*…** Grammatically, the accusative particle את (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when *et* appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:90a, 135b.

In the *Zohar* the word את (*et*) symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who comprises the entire alphabet of divine speech from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*). See the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: "I am *alpha* and *omega*." Here the phrase את יהוה (*et YHVH*) indicates the union of *Shekhinah* and Her partner, *Tif'eret*. See *Zohar* 1:18a; 2:81b.

451. **Other creatures of the field** Angelic forces of *Shekhinah*, who is known as "field" or "Holy Apple Orchard." See *Zohar* 1:29b, and on the image of the field, 1:142b; 2:61b; cf. BT *Ta'anit* 29b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35–37.

452. **as is said: *My innards stirred for him*** The kabbalistic reading of Song of Songs interprets this verse as an expression of the passion of *Shekhinah* for *Tif'eret*. Her *inmost being*, the angels, participate in Her yearning.

453. **speaking on his own behalf** David called upon his own soul to bless the divine union.

454. ***Et YHVH*—consummation of all...** The union of *Shekhinah* and *Tif'eret*.

455. **I see that you have arrived united with *Shekhinah*!** See M *Avot* 3:2: "Rabbi Ḥananya son of Teradyon said, '...If two are sitting engaged in words of Torah, *Shekhinah* dwells between them.'"

On the importance of engaging in Torah while on a journey, see Deuteronomy 6:7; BT *Eruvin* 54a; *Ta'anit* 10b; *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 69b–70a, 76a, 115b.

456. **I've been walking with him for three parasangs** Walking with this companion. According to Rav Sheshet (BT *Sotah* 46b), one should escort his teacher a distance of a parasang. A distinguished teacher, however, is to be escorted for three parasangs. (The Greek parasang equals about 3.5 miles.)

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 18:5; *Bereshit Rabbah* 32:10; *Zohar* 1:51a, 96b, 150b; 2:14a, 164a, 187a; 3:8b.

457. **radiant lamp** בוצינא דנהיר (*Botsina de-nahir*). See 2 Samuel 21:17; *Bereshit Rabbah* 85:4; BT *Ketubbot* 17a, where Rabbi Abbahu is called: בוצינא דנהורא (*Botsina di-Nhora*), "Lamp of Light"; and *Berakhot* 28b, where Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai is called נר ישראל (*Ner Yisra'el*), "Lamp of Israel."

In the *Zohar* Rabbi Shim'on is called בוצינא קדישא (*Botsina Qaddisha*), "Holy Lamp." See 1:3b–4a, 156a, 197b; 3:171a; *ZḤ* 85d (*MhN, Rut*). Cf. above, n. 423.

458. **Let Yo'ezer and El'azar sit together!** The names are virtually identical in meaning, combining a divine name with the verb "to help."

459. **Why two times: *I, I*?** Note how this repetition of the divine pronoun immediately follows the two virtually

identical names Yo'ezer and El'azar.

460. ***He*** As the verse continues: *I, I am He*.

461. **showing there is no separation between above and below** One *I* signifies *Shekhinah*, who manifested at Sinai; the other *I* signifies *Binah*, the Divine Mother. The singular pronoun *He* indicates the union of the two. See *Zohar* 2:85b.

462. **The wicked of the world produce a defect above...** Sin ruins the harmony above, splitting the divine couple and interrupting the flow of blessing. *Tif'eret* (symbolized by compassion) separates from *Shekhinah* ("this rung"), and She no longer conveys emanation to those below. So God obliterates human transgression *for My own sake*, to ensure that *Shekhinah* will continue to receive the flow. The wandering Jew is playing on למעני (*le-ma'ani*), *for My own sake*, and יתמנעון (*yitman'un*), "will be withheld."

463. ***I will bless those who bless you*** Indicating that the *sefirot* who bless Abraham will themselves be blessed with emanation from above.

464. **Isaac appeared...aroused judgment...** Isaac symbolizes *Gevurah*, also known as *Din* ("Judgment"). On the phrase "judgment and Judge prevail," see *Bereshit Rabbah* 26:6; JT *Sanhedrin* 10:2, 28d; *Zohar* 1:72a.

465. **Jacob appeared and aroused compassion...** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, also known as *Raḥamim* ("Compassion"), balancing right and left.

466. ***Melchizedek, king of* שלם (*Shalem*), *Salem*** The verse continues: *brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High*.

467. **throne was crowned...** Abraham aroused blessings for *Shekhinah*, the divine throne, also known as *Melchizedek* (above, page 55) and *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"). Now She manifested in full royalty.

468. ***Let the earth bring forth*** The verse continues: *living beings, according to their kind*. In the discussion of

this verse in *Zohar* 1:13a and 46b, *the earth* symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who generates life.

469. **He brought forth nourishment…** The subject is *Melchizedek*, symbolizing *Shekhinah*.

470. **for all manifested in supernal perfection** *Shekhinah* conveyed the flow of emanation from *Binah* (*God Most High*).

471. ***He gave him a tenth of everything*** According to the plain meaning of Genesis, the subject is Abraham, who gives a tenth to Melchizedek, but the wandering Jew reverses the roles. See Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, Genesis 14:20, n. 133; above, note 444.

472. **Of those blessings issuing *from everything*…** The entire flow of emanation proceeds through *Yesod*, known as *everything*, to *Shekhinah*, the tenth *sefirah*, known as *a tenth*. The verse now means: Melchizedek, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, provided Abraham with a tenth of the blessings of emanation.

473. **the blessed Holy One gave him a tenth** Abraham is the recipient. See *ZḤ* 25a (*MhN*).

474. **A rung on which abide all openings of faith…** *Shekhinah*, the gateway to the divine realm.

475. **A tenth, one of ten, ten of a hundred** *Shekhinah* is the tenth *sefirah*, and each *sefirah* includes ten aspects.

476. **this sage** Rabbi Yeisa.

477. **Rabbi Shim'on** Father of Rabbi El'azar.

478. **he engaged in the washing of hands** Studying the laws of ritual washing upon waking and before eating.

479. **He** Rabbi Shim'on.

480. **He brings poverty upon himself** See BT *Shabbat* 62b: "Three things lead a person to poverty: urinating in front of one's bed naked, neglecting the washing of the hands, and being cursed by one's wife in his presence." See *Orḥot Ḥayyim*, par. 12.

481. **Fill his hands with Your blessings!** ידיו מברכותיך מלא (*Malle yadav mi-birkhote-kha*). The initial letters of these three

words spell מים (*mayim*), "water." See BT *Shabbat* 62b (the continuation of the passage cited above): "Rav Ḥisda said, 'I washed with handfuls of water and was granted handfuls of goodness.'" From a kabbalistic perspective, the ten fingers of the human hand symbolize the ten *sefirot*. By pouring water generously over the fingers, one stimulates an abundant flow of blessing above.

482. ***After these things the word of YHVH came to Abram in a vision*** The verse continues: *saying: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward is very great."*

483. **through an arousal below arises an arousal above...** Human action stimulates the divine. See *Zohar* 1:35a, 77b, 82b, 86b, 164a, 244a; 2:31b, 265a; 3:92a, 110b.

484. **wife of Obadiah...** According to the account in Kings, the prophet Elisha performed a miracle for an anonymous poor woman, providing her with an immense amount of oil. The woman is identified only as *a certain woman, the wife of one of the sons of the prophets* (2 Kings 4:1), but according to various sources she was the widow of the prophet Obadiah.

See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 9:4:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 2:5; *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 5; *Targum*, Rashi, and Radak on 2 Kings 4:1; *ZḤ* 82c (*MhN, Rut*).

485. **blessings from above do not abide on an empty table...** See BT *Sanhedrin* 92a: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'Whoever does not leave bread on his table will never see a sign of blessing.'" Cf. Naḥmanides on Exodus 25:24; *Zohar* 1:240a, 250a; 2:63b, 67a, 87b, 153b, 155a, 157b; 3:34a.

486. **only enough to anoint a little finger** Rabbi Yehudah is playing on the words אסוך (*asukh*), "flask," and סוך (*sukh*), "to anoint." See M *Shabbat* 8:1; Rashi on BT *Shabbat* 77b, s.v. *ever qatan*.

487. **Here blessings abide** Since the verse describing oil is followed by a reference to blessing, Rabbi Yehudah concludes that blessings abide in oil.

488. **not *oil, dew*!** The verse mentioning blessing concerns dew, not oil. It reads in full: *Like the dew of Herman that descends upon the mountains of Zion, for there YHVH ordained blessing, everlasting life*.

489. **oil and dew are one and the same** Both symbolize the flow of emanation.

490. **wine to the left, oil to the right** Wine and its intoxicating power symbolize *Gevurah*. Oil and its rich nourishment symbolize *Ḥesed*. See *Zohar* 1:72b, 96a; 3:7b, 88b.

491. **from there Holy Kingdom is anointed** *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"), last of the ten *sefirot*, is anointed by the flow of emanation from *Ḥesed*.

492. **Since oil was prepared below first…** Since Obadiah's wife had a flask of oil, immense amounts of oil began flowing miraculously. See 2 Kings 4:2–6.

493. **to pour upon David and Solomon so that their descendants will be blessed** To anoint David and Solomon and eventually enthrone their royal descendants, who required no subsequent anointing.

494. **How do we know?** That the kings descended from David and Solomon required no anointing.

495. ***The oil stood*** The full verse reads: *When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." He replied, "There are no more vessels." Then the oil stood*. The final phrase means: "the oil stopped," but the word *stood* implies for Rabbi Yehudah that the flow of oil lasted for generations, symbolically anointing the future kings.

496. **Here is written: *stood*, and there is written: *the root of Jesse…stands…*** The repetition of the verb links the miraculous oil with the line of Davidic kings.

497. **table of the Bread of the Presence…** In the wilderness Tabernacle and later in the Temple in Jerusalem, twelve loaves of bread, arranged in two rows, were placed each Sabbath on a golden table. They remained there until

the following Sabbath, when they were replaced by twelve fresh loaves.

See Exodus 25:30; Leviticus 24:5–9; Naḥmanides on Exodus 25:24. According to M *Menaḥot* 11:7, the weekly ritual of replacement was performed with such precision that the table was never left empty: "Within [the sanctuary] was a table of gold on which the Bread of the Presence lay continually. Four priests entered, two bearing two rows [of bread] in their hands and two bearing two dishes [of frankincense] in their hands. Four preceded them, two to remove two rows and two to remove two dishes… These withdrew [the old] and the others laid down [the new], the handbreadth of one coinciding with the handbreadth of the other, for it is written: *before Me continually* (Exodus 25:30)."

498. **one does not bless over an empty table…** When reciting the Grace after Meals, some bread must remain on the table. See above, note 485.

499. **First, *I am my beloved's…*** First I express my love to God; then once His passion is aroused, He responds. See *Zohar* 3:132b (*IR*), 288a (*IZ*).

500. ***Shekhinah* is not found among sinners** See BT *Ḥagigah* 16a: "Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'Whoever sins secretly, it is as if he thrusts away the feet of *Shekhinah*.'"

501. **If one comes to purify himself…** See BT *Shabbat* 104a: "Resh Lakish said, '…If one comes to defile himself, he is provided an opening; if one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.'"

See *Zohar* 1:54a, 56b, 62a, 76b, 169b, 198b; 2:50a; 3:47a.

502. **after Abraham pursued these kings…** See Genesis 14, and *Vayiqra Rabbah* 1:4: "Rabbi Isaac said, 'Can anyone pursue those already killed, as is written: *He* [Abraham] *smote them and pursued them as far as Hobah* (Genesis 14:15)? Rather this teaches that the blessed Holy One slew and Abraham pursued.'" Cf. Margaliot's edition

and note; *Bereshit Rabbah* 42(43):3 (on Genesis 14:15); above, page 50.

503. **Perhaps, Heaven forbid, I have diminished that reward!…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:4: "Rabbi Levi said, '[*Fear not, Abram…, your reward is very great*.] Because Abraham was frightened, thinking, "Perhaps there was a righteous or God-fearing man among those troops I killed!"… The blessed Holy One said to him, "Those troops whom you killed were cut-down thorns [already doomed]."'" Here Rabbi Yehudah refashions this midrash in accord with the one cited in the previous note, indicating that God, not Abraham, killed the kings.

504. **In that חיזו (*ḥeizu*), mirror—a rung in which all images appear** The Aramaic word חיזו (*ḥeizu*) means "vision, appearance," but in the *Zohar*, also "mirror." See 1:91a, 183a; 2:267a. This added sense may derive from the Hebrew word מראה (*mar'ah*), which means both "vision" and "mirror." Here the mirror is *Shekhinah*, who reflects the images of the higher *sefirot*.

505. **Who was that? *Maḥazeh…Shaddai*** *Shekhinah*, known by the name *Shaddai*. *Shaddai* is an obscure divine name, which may mean "of the mountain." The traditional rendering "Almighty" is unjustified. See below, page 74.

506. **Once he was circumcised, all those rungs rested upon this rung…** The higher *sefirot* manifested through *Shekhinah*, known as *El Shaddai* ("God of *Shaddai*"). *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* symbolize the triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*. Through the rite of circumcision, one is inititated into divine fullness.

On the link between circumcision and divine vision, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:2; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8; *Zohar* 1:91a–b, 97b–98b; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48; idem, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 342, 357–59, 396–97; idem, "Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah," 186–88.

The translation *through El Shaddai* reflects Rabbi Shim'on's understanding of the phrase in Exodus באל שדי (*be-El Shaddai*), usually translated: *as El Shaddai*. The Hebrew preposition ב (*be*) means "in, as, through, with."

507. **At first is written: *YHVH appeared to Abram…*** See above, pages 18–19, where these verses allude to various *sefirot: Shekhinah*, *Ḥesed*, and *Binah*.

508. **mystery of faith** The realm of the *sefirot*.

509. **this lower rung…** *Shekhinah*.

510. **Once circumcised, he enters His name…** The rite of circumcision symbolizes the divine phallus, *Yesod*. Through this act, one participates in the union between *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*, who is known as the divine name. According to *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 14, *Shemini* 8, the mark of circumcision is identified with the י (*yod*) of the divine name שדי (*Shaddai*). A German Hasidic tradition identifies the mark with the *yod* of יהוה (*YHVH*).

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 56a, 95a–b; 2:36a, 216b; 3:142a (*IR*), 215b, 220a, 256a (*RM*); Wolfson, in *JQR* 78 (1987): 77–112; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48.

511. **Abraham was linked with it before he was circumcised!** He had already experienced *Shekhinah* and explored the realm of the *sefirot*.

512. **Covenant—cluster of all those supernal rungs…** *Yesod*, symbolized by the covenant of circumcision. He includes the higher *sefirot*, channeling them to *Shekhinah*.

513. **בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *In the beginning*…namely, ברית (*berit*), covenant** The first and last two letters of בראשית (*Be-reshit*) spell ברית (*berit*), "covenant." On the connection between the two words, see Naḥmanides on Genesis 6:18; *TZ, Haqdamah*, 10b.

514. **through Covenant the blessed Holy One erected…** See BT *Shabbat* 137b: "Were it not for the blood of the covenant [of circumcision], heaven and earth would not endure, as is said: *Were it not for My covenant day and*

night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth." Cf. *Zohar* 1:32a, 56a, 59b, 66b, 91b, 93b.

515. **Covenant is the nexus of *day and night*, inseparable** *Yesod* links *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, symbolized by *day and night*.

516. **When the blessed Holy One created the world, it was on condition…** See BT *Shabbat* 88a: "Resh Lakish said, 'Why is it written: *There was evening and there was morning*, יום הששי (*yom ha-shishi*), *the sixth day*? Why the extra ה (*ha*) [the definite article, which appears only in this phrase and not in any of the corresponding phrases describing the first five days of Creation]? This teaches that the blessed Holy One stipulated a condition with the works of Creation, saying to them: "If Israel accepts the Torah [to be offered at Mount Sinai on the sixth day of the month Sivan], you will endure. If not, I will return you to *chaos and void* (Genesis 1:2)."'"

517. **Ever since that day…Human couplings…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:4, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Simon: "A matron asked Rabbi Yose, 'In how many days did the blessed Holy One create His world?' He replied, 'In six days.' 'Since then what has He been doing?' He replied, 'He sits and matches couples: this man for that woman, this woman for that man.' She said, 'If that seems difficult, I can do it!' She went and matched [her slaves], giving this woman to that man, and this man to that woman. After a while, those who had been matched starting beating one another. This woman said, 'I don't want that man!' This man said, 'I don't want that woman!' He [Rabbi Yose] said to her [the matron], 'If it seems easy to you, it is as difficult for the blessed Holy One as splitting the Red Sea!'"

See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 18b: "Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shemu'el, 'Every single day a heavenly echo issues, proclaiming: "The daughter of so-and-so for so-and-so!"'" Cf. *Sotah* 2a; *Zohar* 1:85b, 90b, 91b; 2:101a.

Here Rabbi El’azar combines the two rabbinic sources, but note his poetic touch: God’s uniting of couples does not just follow Creation, it reenacts Creation. Each human couple constitutes a new world.

518. ***I*—the first rung, to which he was originally linked** *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, the realm of being through which God proclaims: "I am." Abraham began his spiritual journey here. See above, pages 16–18.

519. ***Abram said*, אדני יהוה' (*Adonai YHVH*), *My Lord God*** The verse continues: *what can You give me, seeing that I go naked of children?'*

520. **אלף דלת נון יוד (*alef, dalet, nun, yod*)...** Abram opens his outburst with a double divine name, here spelled out letter by letter. The first name is אדני (*Adonai*), *My Lord;* the second consists of the letters יוד הא ואו הא (*yod, he, vav, he*), though here pronounced *Elohim*. The "mystery" is that these names allude respectively to *Shekhinah* and *Binah*.

521. **whoever has no son in this world is called *ariri*...** See BT *Yevamot* 55a, in the name of Rabbah. The full verse in Leviticus reads: *If a man takes his brother's wife, it is indecency: he has exposed the nakedness of his brother;* *aririm* *they will be*.

522. ***I am your shield*—in this world...** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:4.

523. **one who has not attained sons in this world does not gain entry...** See BT *Bava Batra* 116a: "Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai, 'Whoever does not leave a son to succeed him incurs the full wrath of the blessed Holy One.'"

Cf. *Zohar* 1:13a, 48a, 115a, 186b, 228b; *ZḤ* 89b (*MhN, Rut*); Scholem, in *Tarbiz* 16 (1945): 146–47.

524. **ויוצא (*Va-yotse*), *He took* (*him*) *outside*** The verse reads: *He took him outside and said: 'Look now toward heaven and count the stars, if you can count them.' Then He said to him, 'So shall your seed be.'*

525. **צא (*Tse*), Leave, your astrological speculations!...** See BT *Shabbat* 156a: "Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, '...ויוצא (*Va-yotse*), *He took* (*him*) *outside*.... He [Abraham] said before Him [God], "I have gazed at my horoscope, and I am not fated to engender a son." He

replied, “צא (*Tse*), Leave, your astrological speculations! Israel is immune from planetary influence.”’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:10: “Rabbi Shemu’el son of Yitshak said, ‘[Abraham said,] “My constellation oppresses me, declaring: ‘Abram does not engender.’” The blessed Holy One replied, “Just as you say: Abram and Sarai do not engender; Abraham and Sarah do engender!”’” By changing the names of Abram and Sarai (Genesis 17:5, 15), God freed them from their astrological fate and enabled them to engender Isaac.

See *Tanḥuma, Shofetim* 11; *Zohar* 1:78a; 3:148a, 281b (*RM*); *ZḤ* 72b (*ShS*).

526. **כה (*Koh*), *So, shall your seed be*—mystery of the holy name** *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, reveals God’s nature, and is therefore known as the divine name. She is also called *Koh*, “So, Thus, Here.” See *Zohar* 1:96a; 3:148a; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 12a–13a.

527. **from there a son was linked to him, not from the other aspect** Isaac derived from *Shekhinah*, not from astrological fate.

528. **aspect emerging from the aspect of *Gevurah*...** *Shekhinah* derives from *Gevurah* and manifests divine judgment, while Isaac symbolizes *Gevurah*.

529. **from there fruit and verdure enter the world** Souls emerge from *Shekhinah* through the passion of *Gevurah*.

On souls as fruit, see *Bahir* 14 (22); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489, 504; *Zohar* 1:15b, 19a, 33a, 59b–60a, 82b, 85b, 115a–b; 2:223b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 51; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69). Cf. Ibn Ezra on Psalms 1:3.

530. **in that rung granted to him** *Shekhinah*. See above, pages 16–18.

531. **ויחשב ה׳ לו׳ (*Va-yaḥshov he le-vav*)...** In Genesis the verse is normally interpreted to mean that God deemed Abraham’s act of trust *as righteousness*. Rabbi El’azar reverses the roles: Abraham deemed *Shekhinah* (usually

associated with Judgment) as Compassion because of the gift of a son deriving from Her. *Shekhinah* is symbolized by the second ה (*he*) of יהוה (*YHVH*), while *Tif'eret*, characterized by Compassion, is symbolized by the ו (*vav*).

See Naḥmanides, Bekhor Shor, Gersonides, Abravanel, ad loc.; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, ad loc., n. 83; *Zohar* 3:148a; *KP* on this passage.

532. **linking upper link with lower…** Linking *Binah* with *Shekhinah*. *Shekhinah* is known as צדק (*Tsedeq*), "Righteousness." When She is joined with *Binah*, symbolized by the first ה (*he*) of יהוה (*YHVH*), She is called by the fuller name צדקה (*tsedaqah*), *righteousnesss*.

533. **Look, he engendered Ishmael while he was still Abram!** Before his name was changed to Abraham. See Genesis 16:15.

534. **once he was named Abraham and entered the covenant** Of circumcision. See Genesis 17.

535. **upper cluster** The realm of the *sefirot*.

536. **becoming linked above with Isaac** Joining *Shekhinah*, who emanated the soul of Isaac. Alternatively, Abraham attained *Ḥesed* and linked with *Gevurah*, symbolized by Isaac.

537. ***When Abram was ninety-nine years old* [*YHVH appeared to Abram*]** The verse continues: *and said to him: "I am El Shaddai. Walk in My presence and be perfect."*

538. ***For who is God apart from YHVH? Who is a rock except our God?*** The wording here combines the version in 2 Samuel with Psalms 18:32.

539. **What ruler or official is there…** Among the heavenly powers who administer the world according to divine command.

540. **the blessed Holy One transforms it into a different aspect** God overturns astrological fate. See above, pages 67–68.

541. **no צייר (*tsayyar*), artist, like the blessed Holy One…** See BT *Berakhot* 10a, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on

son of Pazzi: “Come and see how human nature differs from divine nature. A human being draws a figure on the wall but cannot cast into it breath or soul, bowels and intestines. But the blessed Holy One is not so. He designs form within form [the fetus within the womb], casting into it breath and soul, bowels and intestines. This is what Hannah said: *There is none holy like YHVH, far there is none beside You; there is no* צור (*tsur*), *rock, like our God* (1 Samuel 2:2). What does this mean: *there is no tsur like our God*? There is no צייר (*tsayyar*), artist, like our God!” See *Zohar* 3:44a, 141b (*IR*).

542. **inserting supernal soul resembling the supernal array** Into the fetus God casts a soul, whose different aspects correspond to various *sefirot*.

See above, pages 31–33. On the parallel between the soul and God, see BT *Berakhot* 10a (the continuation of the passage cited in the preceding note); *Midrash Tehillim* 103:5. Cf. the divine designation “soul of soul” in Solomon ibn Gabirol’s *Keter Malkhut* 4:47; *Zohar* 1:103b, 245a; 3:109b (*RM*), 152a; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 110, 375, n. 97.

543. **Therefore one should sanctify himself at that time…** During intercourse. See BT *Shevu’ot* 18b: “Rabbi El’azar said, ‘Whoever sanctifies himself during intercourse will have male children.’” See *Zohar* 112a (*MhN*), 155a (*ST*); 3:56a; *ZḤ* 11a (*MhN*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1363–64.

544. **artistry and design of a human being resemble the world** According to *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 3, the human being is a microcosm. See the detailed comparison of the human body and the world in *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:4. Cf. *Zohar* 1:134b, 186b.

545. **creates worlds, coupling couples…** See above, page 66; and *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:4, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Simon: “A matron asked Rabbi Yose, ‘In how many days did the blessed Holy One create His world?’ He replied, ‘In six days.’ ‘Since then what has He been doing?’

He replied, ‘He sits and matches couples: this man for that woman, this woman for that man.’ She said, ‘If that seems difficult, I can do it!’ She went and matched [her slaves], giving this woman to that man, and this man to that woman. After a while, those who had been matched starting beating one another. This woman said, ‘I don’t want that man!’ This man said, ‘I don’t want that woman!’ He [Rabbi Yose] said to her [the matron], ‘If it seems easy to you, it is as difficult for the blessed Holy One as splitting the Red Sea!’”

Here God’s uniting of couples does not just follow Creation, it reenacts Creation. Each human couple constitutes a new world.

546. **He designs their images before they enter the world** God has already designed the spiritual image of each individual human being, an ethereal body for the soul.

See *Zohar* 1:220a, 227b, 233b; 2:96b, 161b; 3:43a–b, 104a–b; Scholem, in *Tarbiz* 24 (1955): 290–306; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158–59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 251–73; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:770–73. Cf. Rashi on BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, s.v. *ve-ruḥot unshamot*.

547. **Was there really a book? Rather…** See BT *Avodah Zarah* 5a: “Did not Resh Lakish say: ‘What is the meaning of the verse *This is the book of the generations of Adam*…? Did Adam possess a book? Rather, this teaches that the blessed Holy One showed Adam every generation with its expounders, every generation with its sages, every generation with its leaders.’”

On the Book of Adam, see *Zohar* 1:17b, 37b, 55a–b, 58b, 72b, 227b; 2:70a–b, 70a–b (*RR*), 77a, 131a, 143b, 180a, 181a, 197a; 3:10a, 68b; *ZḤ* 16d (*MhN*), 37b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:117–18, n. 110; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 85–87.

548. **in the actual image they are destined to assume in the world** See above, note 546.

549. **another image in which to be clothed, resembling…** Upon leaving this world, the souls of the

righteous are clothed once again. According to *Zohar* 1:224a–b, this garment is woven out of one's virtuous days. Parallels appear in Islamic and Iranian eschatology—and also in Mahayana Buddhism, according to which the Buddha enjoys *sambhogakaya* ("a body of bliss"), generated by merit accrued over aeons.

See *Zohar* 1:7a, 66a, 82b; 2:11a, 150a, 210a–b, 229b, 247a (*Heikh*); 3:70b, 101a, 174b; *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:133); Scholem, *Major Trends*, 77–78; Nakamura Hajime, in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Eliade, 2:458; and the secondary sources cited above, note 546.

Cf. *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 36; *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:6; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:35; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14; Matthew 22:1–14.

550. ***but with the one who is here…*** The verse continues: *standing with us today in the presence of* YHVH *our God, and with the one who is not here with us today*. The verse describes who is included in the covenant with God.

551. **all human beings destined to exist in the world were present there** When Torah was revealed at Mount Sinai. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 41; cf. *Tanḥuma, Yitro* 11, *Pequdei* 3, *Nitsavim* 3; *Shemot Rabbah* 28:6; BT *Shabbat* 146a; *Zohar* 2:83b.

552. **for it is written: *with us today*, not: *standing with us today*** The conclusion of the verse, *and with the one who is not here with us today*, omits the word *standing*, implying that the future generations were not actually present at Sinai.

553. **eye-to-eye** Face-to-face. The idiom appears in Numbers 14:14; Isaiah 52:8. On Adam's vision of the souls, see above, page 71.

554. **seeing that here was even more suitable** Since at Sinai all of Israel regained their pristine nature and experienced direct revelation. See BT *Shabbat* 146a, in the name of Rav Yosef.

555. **a different sight and supernal rungs** The revelation of *Shekhinah* and the higher *sefirot*.

556. **So they saw the supernal glory…, nothing else** Preoccupied with divine revelation, they did not notice the souls who were there.

557. ***Your eyes saw my unfinished body*. How so?…** Even before the body was fashioned, God saw its spiritual image. See *Zohar* 1:233b.

558. ***Who is* צור (*tsur*), *a rock*… Who צייר (*tsayyeir*), designs, human images…** See the passage from BT *Berakhot* 10a, cited above, note 541.

559. ***For who is* אל (*El*), *God*…** The verse continues: *apart from YHVH?*

560. ***El* constitutes totality, comprised of all those rungs** *El* is a name of *Shekhinah*, who includes all of the *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 1:8a, 3:119b, 176b.

561. **Look, *El* is a different rung, since it is written: *El rages every day*!** *Shekhinah* manifests divine sternness and wrath. See the sources cited in the preceding note.

562. ***El* does not exist *apart from YHVH*, for He is not alone…** *Shekhinah* is not separate from Her partner, *Tif'eret*, known as *YHVH*. Even when manifesting divine anger, She (here, called "He") is not *apart from YHVH*.

563. ***rock* is not alone** *Shekhinah*, even when She manifests harshness, is not separate.

564. **יהוה (*YHVH*) *is* האלהים (*ha-Elohim*), *God*** In rabbinic literature these two names represent the divine qualities of compassion and justice, respectively. See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 26; *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15; 33:3. In Kabbalah they designate *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, who are one and inseparable. See *Zohar* 1:4a, 12a, 20a, 48b; 2:161a, 229a; 3:138b (*IR*); *ZḤ* 70d (*ShS*).

565. **He spoke with him only through a vision…** Only through *Shekhinah*. See above, page 64.

566. ***In maḥazeh*—in that חיזו (*ḥeizu*), mirror…** The Aramaic word חיזו (*ḥeizu*) means "vision, appearance," but in

the *Zohar*, also "mirror." See 1:88b, 183a; 2:267a. This added sense may derive from the Hebrew word מראה (*mar'ah*), which means both "vision" and "mirror." Here the mirror is *Shekhinah*, who reflects the images of the higher *sefirot*.

567. **This *maḥazeh* is mystery of covenant** *Shekhinah* is linked with *Yesod*, the divine phallus, symbolized by the covenant of circumcision. The chapter that opens with the reference to *maḥazeh* closes with the promise of covenant (15:18).

568. **before he was circumcised it is written:... *maḥazeh*!** The reference to *maḥazeh* (symbolizing *Shekhinah* reflecting all the *sefirot*) appears before Abraham was circumcised. This seems to contradict the claim that then *Shekhinah* alone spoke with him, without the participation of any other *sefirot*.

569. **spectrum of those colors displayed below...** Below *Shekhinah* the colors of the higher *sefirot* manifested in the forces of the divine chariot. The triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret* appeared there in their respective colors: white, red, and a blend of colors. See *Zohar 1:97b*, 97b–102a (*ST*), 101a.

570. **So in this mirror He stood over Abraham, speaking with him...** Before Abraham was circumcised, *Shekhinah* alone spoke with Abraham. Though the colors of the higher *sefirot* were reflected in Her, they were invisible to him.

571. **Once he was circumcised...*YHVH appeared to Abram*** Now the revelation included the higher *sefirot* clustered around *Tif'eret*, who is known as *YHVH*. The verse cited here opens the chapter containing the command of circumcision and is also cited at the beginning of this passage, above, page 69.

On the link between circumcision and divine vision, see above, note 506.

572. מחזה **(*maḥazeh*), *vision of, Shaddai*** The full verse reads: *Oracle of one who hears words of God, who envisages a vision of Shaddai, prostrate but with eyes unveiled*.

573. ***Maḥazeh Shaddai*—those below, issuing from it, its reflection** The prophet Balaam saw only a reflection of *Shekhinah*, who is known as *Shaddai*. See *Zohar* 3:194a.

574. ***Maḥazeh*, unspecified—ה (*he*)...** Abraham saw *Shekhinah* Herself, symbolized by the final letter of the name יהוה (*YHVH*).

575. **he abandoned the foreskin** Symbolizing the demonic. See *Zohar* 1:13a, 18a, 35b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (68).

576. **entered the sacred covenant, crowned with the sacred corona** In the ritual of circumcision, first the foreskin is removed, disclosing the mucous membrane, which is then torn down the center and pulled back, revealing the corona. The removal of the foreskin symbolizes *Yesod*, the divine phallus, while uncovering the corona symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is known as *Atarah* ("Corona, Crown"). Here, through the act of circumcision, Abraham attained both *sefirot*, uniting the divine couple.

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 32a (*Tos*), 96b, 98b (*ST*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 133. Cf. *Zohar* 2:40a, 125b; 3:91b, 95b. On Abraham and uncovering the corona, see BT *Yevamot* 71b; *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *sof milah;* Rashi on Genesis 17:25; *Zohar* 3:163b. On *Shekhinah* as corona of the phallus, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 274–75, n. 14; 357–68; idem, "Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah"; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 85–92.

577. **covenant upon which the world stands** *Yesod* ("Foundation"). See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Rabbi El'azar son of Shamu'a says, '[The world stands] upon a single pillar named Righteous One, as is said: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world* (Proverbs 10:25).'"

578. ***Were it not for My covenant day and night…*** See BT *Shabbat* 137b: “Were it not for the blood of the covenant [of circumcision], heaven and earth would not endure, as is said: *Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth.*” Cf. *Zohar* 1:32a, 56a, 59b, 66b, 89a, 93b.

579. **בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created…*** Both midrashic readings presented here derive from *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9–10. According to Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Korḥah, בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created*, is an anagram of באברהם (*be-Avraham*), “through Abraham,” indicating that the world was created for his sake. See *Zohar* 1:3b, 86b, 93a, 105b, 128b, 154b, 230b; 3:117a.

According to Rabbi Yoḥanan, בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*) is an anagram of בה׳ ברא׳ם (*be-he bera’am*), “With [the letter] *he* He created them.” See JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77c; BT *Menaḥot* 29b; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva* (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:363); *Zohar* 1:46b.

Here the two motifs are linked and constitute “a single mystery” because the letter *he*, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, was added to the name אברם (*Avram*), transforming it into אברהם (*Avraham*) (Genesis 17:5).

580. **When the blessed Holy One showed Adam all those generations…** See above, page 71.

581. **When he saw David totally devoid of life…** According to a midrashic tradition, King David was destined to die at childbirth, but Adam offered him 70 of his own 1000 allotted years, so David lived for 70 years and Adam for 930.

See Genesis 5:5; Jubilees 4:30; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 19, and David Luria, ad loc., n. 31; *Midrash Tehillim* 92:10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:12; *Bereshit Rabbati* 5:5; *Yalqut Shim’oni*, Genesis, 41; *Zohar* 1:55a, 140a, 168a, 233b, 248b; 2:103b, 235a; *ZḤ* 67d (*ShS*), 81a (*MhN, Rut*); Moses

de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 68 (85); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 383.

582. **David possesses only 70 years from Primordial Adam** King David symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"). She possesses nothing of Her own, only what She receives from the seven *sefirot* above Her, from *Binah* to *Yesod*, known collectively as Primordial Adam. See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 68 (85).

583. **All those images of souls…stand before Him in couples** Human souls exist originally without gender distinction. On their journey toward the world, they become male and female but are still united androgynously until they enter an individual male or female body. See the rabbinic tradition on the original nature of Adam (*Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1): "Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El'azar said, 'When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him androgynous, as is said: *Male and female He created them* (Genesis 1:27).' Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥman said, 'When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him with two faces. Then He sawed him and gave him two backs, one on this side and one on that.'"

See Plato, *Symposium* 189d–191d; BT *Berakhot* 61a; *Eruvin* 18a; *Zohar* 1:13b, 47a, 85b, 108a; 2:55a, 246a (*Heikh*); 3:43a–b, 283b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1355–56; Matt, *Zohar*, 217.

584. **Later…the blessed Holy One matches couples** Ideally, God arranges marriages between two souls who were originally paired. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:4, cited above, note 545. Cf. *Zohar* 1:85b, 89a; 2:101a.

585. **The daughter of so-and-so for so-and-so!** See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 18b: "Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shemu'el, 'Every single day a heavenly echo issues, proclaiming: "The daughter of so-and-so for so-and-so!"'" Cf. BT *Sotah* 2a.

586. **Look at what is written: *There is nothing new under the sun*!** Since all souls were originally paired, their

reunion *is nothing new*. Why, then, the need for a divine proclamation?

587. **The verse reads: *under the sun*. It is different above!** A heavenly proclamation from above could create a new coupling. Cf. *Vayiqra Rabbah* 28:1; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 8:1; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:3; *Zohar* 1:223b; 2:59a, 115b.

588. **At the very moment a human being issues… his mate is destined…** So a heavenly proclamation seems unnecessary.

589. **all those spirits and souls comprise male and female joined as one** See above, note 583.

590. **emissary appointed over human conception** This angel is named Lailah ("Night") according to BT *Niddah* 16b (in the name of Rabbi Ḥanina son of Papa). Cf. Job 3:3. Elsewhere (2:11a–b) the *Zohar* identifies the emissary with Gabriel.

591. **sometimes one preceding the other** Sometimes the female soul enters the world before the male soul, or vice-versa.

592. **right and** left Male and female.

593. **So, *There is nothing new under the sun*** The proclamation is issued not to announce something new but to celebrate the fact that the soul mates have been reunited here on earth.

594. **Coupling accords only with a person's conduct** See BT *Sotah* 2a: "When Resh Lakish opened the discussion of the straying wife, he said as follows: 'A man is only coupled with a woman according to his deeds.'" Cf. *Zohar* 1:229a.

595. **he attains his—uniting as when issuing** He reunites with his original mate.

596. **A man should always… marry the daughter of a scholar** See BT *Pesaḥim* 49a: "Our rabbis taught: 'A man should always sell everything he owns and marry the

daughter of a scholar, for if he dies or goes into exile, he is assured that his children will be scholars.’”

597. **mystery of the Mishnah** The *Zohar* often cites teachings from a secret, mystical Mishnah known only to its own circle. See *Zohar* 1:37b, 55b, 74a, 93a, 95b, 96a, 224a, 252a (*Hash*); 3:57b, 61b, 78a, 284b, 285a. This is to be distinguished from the *Matnitin* of the *Zohar*, on which see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216.

598. **cycling of souls** גלגולא דנשמתין (*Gilgula de-nishmatin*), “Revolving, reincarnation of souls.” On reincarnation in Kabbalah, see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 344–50.

599. **Lest another anticipate him by supplication** See BT *Mo’ed Qatan* 18b: “Shemu’el said, ‘One is allowed to betroth a woman during the intermediate days of a festival, lest another [rival suitor] anticipate him.’… But could Shemu’el have said, ‘Lest another anticipate him’? Surely Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shemu’el, ‘Every single day a heavenly echo issues, proclaiming: “The daughter of so-and-so for so-and-so!…”’… Rather, ‘lest another anticipate him by supplication.’” In other words, even though a man’s mate has been decreed from above, another suitor can anticipate him and obtain the latter’s intended mate through fervent prayer.

Here Rabbi Abba’s point is that a man whose soul has reincarnated and whose previous soul mate has not, can anticipate an unmarried man and obtain the latter’s intended mate. See *Zohar* 1:73b; 2:101a; 3:78b, 283b.

600. **‘another,’ precisely!** A reincarnated soul, not originally intended to be matched with this particular woman. See *Zohar* 2:101a, 103a; Rashi on BT *Sotah* 2a, s.v. *zug sheni*.

601. **So coupling is difficult for the blessed Holy One** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:4 (cited above, note 545): “[Matchmaking] is as difficult for the blessed Holy One as splitting the Red Sea!”

Here the difficulty lies in the fact that the reincarnated soul replaces the originally intended husband. In order to reunite the latter with his soul mate, God has to eliminate the interloper. See *Zohar* 1:73b.

602. ***the ways of YHVH are right***… The verse continues: *the righteous walk in them, while the rebellious stumble in them*. The originally intended husband can only gain (or regain) his soul mate if he lives righteously. See above, page 77.

603. ***How can we provide wives for those who remain*** The verse continues: *since we have sworn by YHVH not to give them any of our daughters as wives*?

604. ***Seize for yourselves…*** The context reads: *They instructed the Benjaminites, saying, "Go and lie in wait in the vineyards, and watch: As soon as the girls of Shiloh come out to join in dancing, come out of the vineyards and seize for yourselves a wife from the girls of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin"* (ibid., 20–21).

605. **episode of the Benjaminites…** In a battle against other Israelite tribes, the tribe of Benjamin was decimated. Its continued existence was made possible only because the six hundred remaining warriors were permitted to seize new wives from Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh. This episode (Judges 19–21) demonstrates that a man can obtain a wife not originally intended for him.

606. ***She is your life and the length of your days*** The verse reads: *He* [or: *that*] *is your life*…, referring either to God or to loving, heeding, and cleaving to Him (mentioned immediately before). The substitution of הִיא (*hi*), *she*, for הוּא (*hu*), *he* [or: *that*], in this verse appears elsewhere, e.g., in *Tanḥuma, Yitro* 15, *Ki Tissa* 15, *Shemini* 11; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 2; *Zohar* 1:168a, 244b.

607. ***They will bestow on you…*** The subject is Torah and the commandments.

608. ***When Abram was ninety-nine years old* [*YHVH appeared to Abram*]…** The verse continues: *and said to*

him: "I am El Shaddai. Walk in My presence and be perfect."

609. ***Your people, all of them righteous…*** This verse, appearing frequently in the *Zohar*, is cited in M *Sanhedrin* 10:1 to demonstrate that "all of Israel have a share in the world that is coming."

610. **winged creatures** Angels. See *Zohar* 1:4a, 44a, 152a; 2:13a, 122b; 3:80b.

611. **There is nothing in the world without a voice…** Nothing done below goes unnoticed above, so Israel are fortunate that God calls them *righteous*. See *Zohar* 2:59a; 3:85a.

612. ***For a bird of heaven will carry the voice…*** The verse continues: *a winged creature will report the word*. The verse is understood as alluding to angels in *Devarim Rabbah* 6:10; *Zohar* 1:34b; 3:138a (*IR*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 203; cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:3; *Devarim Rabbah* 8:2.

613. **his soul… testifies regarding him…** See BT *Ḥagigah* 16a: "Perhaps you will say, 'Who testifies against me?'… The Sages say, 'A person's soul testifies against him, as is said: *From her who lies in your bosom guard the doors of your mouth*. What is it that lies in a person's bosom? You must admit it is the soul.'"

See *Zohar* 1:121b; 3:67a, 121b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:809–14.

614. **the first hour** Of the night.

615. **expires** נשף (*Neshaph*), "Breathe, blow." See BT *Berakhot* 3b: "Rava said, 'There are two נשפי (*nishpei*): night *neshaph*, expires, and day arrives; day expires and night arrives.'" Cf. Song of Songs 2:17.

616. **keeper of keys appointed over the sun** Perhaps Metatron, the chief angel. In *Zohar* 1:37b, he is said to possess one thousand keys; cf. 1:56b, 223b.

617. **twelve gates open during the day** During each hour of the day the sun enters one gate. Now as the sun is

setting the guardian angel of the sun enters them all. See *Zohar* 2:128b.

618. **all those guardians of the world** The angels.

619. **they arouse song, chanting before their Lord** The angels, until now silent, begin to sing. Cf. *Zohar* 1:231a–b; 2:195b.

620. **found guilty** Since sin is unavoidable, no one is innocent.

621. **But the blessed Holy One acts lovingly** … Restoring the soul to the body. See *Zohar* 3:119a; *ZḤ* 18b (*MhN*), 89a (*MhN, Rut*).

622. **side of the North arouses in a wind** See BT *Berakhot* 3b.

623. **so it subsides, turning fragrant** The power of the South, symbolizing *Ḥesed*, calms the harsh power of the North, symbolizing *Gevurah*.

624. **Then the blessed Holy One arouses … to delight…** At midnight God delights in the souls of the righteous in the Garden of Eden, and those who study Torah here below partake of the celestial joy. See Psalms 119:62 (cited below); and BT *Berakhot* 3b: "Rabbi Shim'on the Ḥasid said, 'There was a harp suspended above [King] David's bed. As soon as midnight arrived, a north wind came and blew upon it, and it played by itself. He immediately arose and engaged in Torah until the break of dawn.'"

In the *Zohar* this legendary custom is expanded into a ritual: all kabbalists are expected to rise at midnight and adorn *Shekhinah* with words of Torah and song in preparation for Her union with *Tif'eret*. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 146–50. This parallels the midnight vigil that was common among Christian monks from early medieval times. In *Zohar* 3:119a, Rabbi Yehudah alludes to the Christian practice: "I have seen something similar among the nations of the world."

See *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 3:3, 111b; *Aggadat Bereshit* 23:5; BT *Sanhedrin* 102a; 2 Enoch 8:3; *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:138); *Zohar* 1:10b, 72a, 77a, 82b, 136b, 178b, 231b; 2:46a, 130a–b, 136a, 173b, 195b-196a; 3:21b-22b, 52b, 193a; *ZḤ* 13c (*MhN*). Cf. Matthew 25:6.

625. **the blessed Holy One and all the righteous… listen…** See BT *Shabbat* 63a: "Rabbi Abba said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish, 'When two disciples of the wise listen to one another in *halakhah*, the blessed Holy One listens to their voice, as is said: *You who dwell in the gardens, companions listen for your voice; let me hear!*'" See *Zohar* 1:77b, 178b, 231b; 2:46a; 3:13a, 22a, 213a.

626. **the blessed Holy One emanates upon him a thread of grace…** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Resh Lakish said, 'Whoever engages in Torah at night, the blessed Holy One emanates a thread of grace upon him by day, as is said: *By day YHVH directs His grace*. Why? Because *at night His song is with me*.'" *His song* is the song of Torah.

See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 3:13; *Zohar* 1:82b, 178b, 194b; 2:149a.

627. **What do you mean, 'constantly'?** How can one experience in this world the world that is coming?

628. **all the plants of the Garden are watered profusely…** The *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*, planted in the Garden of *Shekhinah*, are watered by the constant stream of *Binah*. She is known as Stream of Antiquity (see Judges 5:21) and Stream of Delights.

629. **shares constantly in the world that is coming** He tastes here and now the rich flow of eternal life.

עלמא דאתי (*Alma de-atei*), the Aramaic equivalent of the rabbinic Hebrew העולם הבא (*ha-olam ha-ba*), "the world that is coming," is often understood as referring to the hereafter and is usually translated as "the world to come." From another point of view, however, "the world that is coming" already exists, occupying another dimension. See *Tanḥuma, Vayiqra* 8: "The wise call it *ha-olam ha-ba* not because it does

not exist now, but for us today in this world it is still to come." Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:8; and Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, 37: "'The world to come' does not succeed 'this world' in time, but exists from eternity as a reality outside and above time, to which the soul ascends."

In Kabbalah "the world that is coming" often refers to *Binah*, the ceaseless stream of emanation, who engenders and nourishes the lower *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 3:290b (*IZ*): "the world that is coming, constantly coming, never ceasing."

Cf. *Bahir* 106 (160); Asher ben David, *Peirush Shelosh Esreh Middot*, in *Kabbalah* 2 (1997): 293; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 26 (30); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 375; above, pages 30–31.

630. **castle** בי טרוניא (*Bei tirunya*), "House of sovereignty." See *Targum Yerushalmi* and Rashi, Numbers 31:10; *Zohar* 3:118a.

631. **Clod Village** כפר טרשא (*Kefar tarsha*). *Tarsha* means "stony, nonarable ground; clod; crag." Here Kefar Tarsha is apparently situated in Galilee. According to *Zohar* 1:101a–b (*MhN*), the village was renamed Mata Meḥasya. The latter is a suburb of Sura on the Euphrates and the site of a rabbinic academy. The link between the two locations is clarified at the end of this story. See above, 1:72a; below, pages 97, 114–15; BT *Ketubbot* 4a.

632. **I want to rise at midnight** To study Torah. See above, pages 80–81. Rabbi Abba wants to be wakened by the rooster's midnight crowing.

According to Rashi on BT *Eruvin* 53b, s.v. *maggidei ba-alatah*, the rooster's crows mark the various divisions of the night. See *Pereq Shirah*, 2:57 (s.v. *tarnegol*): "When the blessed Holy One comes to the righteous in the Garden of Eden, all the trees of the Garden sprinkle spices before Him. Then he [the rooster] praises."

See Naḥmanides on Job 38:36; *Zohar* 1:10b, 77b, 218b; 2:196a; 3:22b–23b, 171b; *ZḤ* 88a (*MhN, Rut*).

633. **signal** סימנא (*Simana*), “Sign,” the same word used in BT *Berakhot* 3b, in connection with the David’s harp, which roused him at midnight.

634. **weighted water clock** טיקלא (*Tiqla*), a Zoharic neologism derived from the root תקל (*tql*), “weigh.” The word has a wide range of meaning: “scale, hollow of the hand, fist, potter’s wheel, water clock.” See above, note 51.

The mechanism of the water clock (or clepsydra) is described in *Libro del relogio del agua*, a treatise written by Isaac ibn Sid of Toledo for King Alfonso X of Castile (1252–1284). Water clocks equipped with an alarm device functioned in medieval European monasteries to awaken monks for nighttime prayers.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:12; Hai Gaon, cited by Solomon ibn Adret on *Berakhot* 3b; *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178; Baer, *History*, 1:437; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 332; Drover, “A Medieval Monastic Water-Clock”; Hill, *Arabic Water-Clocks*, 125–31.

635. **this cogwheel spins and clangs** See Drover, “A Medieval Monastic Water-Clock,” 58: “Presumably, as the large wheel rotated, the teeth at its circumference engaged with levers and caused the bells to be sounded…. An alternative suggestion is that the large wheel is merely an alarm wheel which was weight operated and released when the water in the clock reached a particular level.” An illustration appears on p. 55.

Cf. Scholem’s drawing and description of the *tiqla* in his *Sefer ha-Zohar*, 1:501 (unnumbered): “A scale having on one side a weight, and on the other a jug filled with water which escapes drop by drop. Exactly at midnight the vessel becomes empty, causing the weight on the other side to fall and sound an alarm throughout the house.”

“Cogwheel” renders קיטפא (*qitpa*), literally “resin, sap, gum.” The word appears in various neologistic phrases in the *Zohar* and in this passage is linked twice with the root גלגל (*glgl*), “revolve, wheel.” See *Zohar* 2:38a; 3:10b, 15a,

19a, 45b, 288a (*IZ*). The mechanism of certain Alfonsine clocks consisted of a wooden drum sealed with resin. See Bedini, “The Compartmented Cylindrical Clepsydra,” 117.

636. **But *Midnight*, literally! This he exclaimed to the blessed Holy One** David began by addressing God directly, calling Him *Midnight*.

637. **Let us certainly join *Shekhinah* and unite as one!** Rabbi Abba senses the presence of *Shekhinah* in this midnight study session. See M *Avot* 3:2: “Rabbi Ḥananya son of Teradyon said, ‘… If two are sitting engaged in words of Torah, *Shekhinah* dwells between them.’”

See *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 70a, 87a, 115b, 135b.

638. **supernal nocturnal conduct** Divine conduct, as opposed to the lower activity of the chastisers. See *Zohar* 2:37b.

639. ***The night was divided for them*** The verse continues: *for him and his servants, and he struck them and pursued them as far as Hobah*. The context is Abraham’s battle against the coalition of kings. The verse opens by describing Abraham’s deployment and means literally *He divided himself* [i.e., his forces] *against them by night, he and his servants*. Here the host teaches that at midnight, when *the night was divided*, God granted Abraham victory. See *Zohar* 1:112b.

640. ***Now it was in the middle of the night*** Describing the last of the ten plagues, the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn.

641. **so it is found frequently in Torah** According to rabbinic tradition, numerous biblical miracles occurred at midnight. See the hymn *Vayhi ba-ḥatsi ha-lailah* (*Now it was in the middle of the night*) in the Passover haggadah.

642. **David knew** The power manifesting at midnight. The phrase derives from the Talmudic discussion of how David knew the precise moment of midnight. See BT *Berakhot* 3b–4a, cited in part above, note 624.

643. **his kingship depended on this** David's kingship depended on *Shekhinah*, known as *Malkhut* ("Kingship"), who manifests at midnight.

644. **So he rose at that hour and chanted songs…** To *Shekhinah*. See above, page 57.

In thirteenth-century Castile, King Alfonso X (1252–1284) also sang to the idealized feminine, imagining himself as troubadour of the Virgin Mary. In his *Cantigas de Santa María* (1:102,19–26) he chants: "I wish today to be her Troubadour, and I beg that she will desire me for her Troubadour and will want to receive my song."

645. **all judgments derive from here…** All judgments executed in the world derive from the manifestation of *Shekhinah* (*Malkhut*) at midnight. She is characterized by judgment.

646. **If so, why is it written: *Midnight?*** Since *Shekhinah* is symbolized by "Night," David could have addressed Her simply with that word.

647. **Kingdom of Heaven** מלכותא דשמיא (*Malkhuta dishmaya*), namely, *Malkhut* (*Shekhinah*).

648. **dazzling topaz** טברקא (*Tavreqa*), a neologism apparently combining טבאג (*tav'ag*), a precious stone, perhaps "topaz," and ברק (*baraq*), "flash of lightning." See *Targum* on Song of Songs 5:14; *Zohar* 3:141b (*IR*): דגושפנקא טברקא (*tavreqa de-gushpanqa*), "*tavreqa* of a signet ring." Rabbi Abba is eager to hear the gem of wisdom from the child's mouth.

649. **spark** בוצינא (*Botsina*), "Lamp," but also "spark" in the *Zohar*. Rabbi Shim'on is frequently called בוצינא קדישא (*Botsina Qaddisha*), "Holy Lamp." See *Zohar* 1:3a–4a, 156a, 197b; 3:171a; *ZḤ* 85d (*MhN, Rut*).

See 2 Samuel 21:17; *Bereshit Rabbah* 85:4; BT *Ketubbot* 17a, where Rabbi Abbahu is called: בוצינא דנהורא (*Botsina di-Nhora*), "Lamp of Light"; and *Berakhot* 28b, where Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai is called נר ישראל (*Ner Yisra'el*), "Lamp of Israel."

Here Rabbi Abba prays that the child's dazzling words of wisdom may resound like the voice of the Master, Rabbi Shim'on.

650. **royal judgment** דינא דמלכותא (*Dina de-Malkhuta*), "Judgment of the Kingdom," derived from the saying of Shemu'el (BT *Nedarim* 28a): דינא דמלכותא דינא (*Dina de malkhuta dina*), "The law of the kingdom is law." Here *malkhuta* refers to *Malkhut* (*Shekhinah*), symbolized by night and characterized by judgment. See *Zohar* 1:226b; 3:11b.

651. **absorbing two modes: judgment and love** *Shekhinah* absorbs the flow of emanation from both the left and right sides: *Din* ("Judgment") and *Ḥesed* ("Love").

652. **half... the other half...*Midnight*** During the first half of the night, judgment dominates, while during the second half, love prevails. The dual nature of *Shekhinah* is reflected in Her name חצות (*Ḥatsot*), *Midnight*, understood by the child as "[two] halves."

653. **even children in the generation of Rabbi Shim'on...** On the unique nature of the generation of Rabbi Shim'on, see *Zohar* 3:22b, 79a, 171a, 187a; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 29.

654. **This word has already been established...** This verse, appearing frequently in the *Zohar*, is cited in M *Sanhedrin* 10:1 to demonstrate that "all of Israel have a share in the world that is coming."

655. **in the mystery of our Mishnah** The *Zohar* often cites teachings from a secret, mystical Mishnah known only to its own circle. See 1:37b, 55b, 74a, 91b, 95b, 96a, 224a, 252a (*Hash*); 3:57b, 61b, 78a, 284b, 285a. This is to be distinguished from the *Matnitin* of the *Zohar*, on which see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216.

656. **offering up their sons on the eighth day** Rabbi Abba sees the ritual of circumcision as a sacrificial offering. See *Zohar* 1:94b-95a; 2:66b, 255b; 3:44a (*Piq*), 164a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (68). Cf. *Shemot Rabbah* 19:5; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 10.

According to some biblical scholars, circumcision originated as a substitute for child sacrifice. See Exodus 22:28–29; Leviticus 12:2–5; 22:27; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 32–33.

657. **When they are circumcised, they enter this fine share…** Through the act of circumcision, one enters the sefirotic realm of *Yesod*, the divine phallus. *Yesod* is known as Righteous One, based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse, which literally means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

658. **So, *they will inherit the land forever… righteousness…*** Having attained the level of *Yesod*, they are able to unite with His partner, *Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by *the land* and called *righteousness*.

659. **plants planted by the blessed Holy One…** The seven lower *sefirot* emanating from *Binah*. See *Bahir* 117 (172); *Zohar* 1:216a.

660. **So Israel has a share in the world that is coming…** See M *Sanhedrin* 10:1: "All of Israel have a share in the world that is coming, as is said: *Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever—sprout of My planting, work of My hands, that I may be glorified.*"

661. **What does *le-olam* mean?…** The word עולם (*olam*) means both "eternity" and "world," so לעולם (*le-olam*) can mean "forever" and "to [or: in] a world." Here the allusion is to *Binah*, known as "the world that is coming" (see above, note 629). In the bliss of that realm, Israel will inherit *Shekhinah* (*the land*).

662. **What prompted Scripture not to call him Abraham until now?** The patriarch's name was originally אברם (*Avram*) and was changed to אברהם (*Avraham*) in Genesis 17:5.

663. **once he was, he entered this ה (*he*)...** Through the act of circumcision, the patriarch attained intimacy with *Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by the second *he* of the divine name יהוה (*YHVH*). Then this letter he was added to his name, transforming אברם (*Avram*) into אברהם (*Avraham*).

664. **בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*...** Both midrashic readings presented here derive from *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9–10. According to Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah, בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*, is an anagram of באברהם (*be-Avraham*), "through Abraham," indicating that the world was created for his sake. See *Zohar* 1:3b, 86b, 91b, 105b, 128b, 154b, 230b; 3:117a.

According to Rabbi Yoḥanan, בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*) is an anagram of בה׳ ברא (*be-he bera'am*), "With [the letter] *he* He created them." See JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77c; BT *Menaḥot* 29b; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva* (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:363); *Zohar* 1:46b.

665. **One is *Ḥesed;* the other, *Shekhinah*** Abraham symbolizes *Ḥesed* (see above, pages 19, 29), while the letter ה (*he*) symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

666. **All descends as one...** The flow of emanation—through which the world is created—is indivisible. Thus *Shekhinah* also conveys the light of *Ḥesed*, both of which are symbolized in the word בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*).

667. **small...large** As these particular letters are traditionally written in a Torah scroll. See *Zohar* 3:297b; *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.

668. **One is Sabbatical; the other, Jubilee** The small ה (*he*), corresponding to the second *he* of the name יהוה (*YHVH*), represents *Shekhinah*, symbolized by Sabbatical. The large ה (*he*), corresponding to the first *he* of the name יהוה (*YHVH*), represents *Binah*, symbolized by Jubilee. See *Zohar* 1:3b; 2:132a, 180b.

According to the Bible, every seventh year is a Sabbatical שמטה ([*shemittah*], "release"), during which the

land must lie fallow and at the end of which all debts are remitted (Leviticus 25:1–24; Deuteronomy 15:1–3). In Kabbalah the Sabbatical symbolizes *Shekhinah*, seventh of the lower *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 1:153b.

In the biblical cycle, after seven Sabbaticals comes the Jubilee, proclaimed every fifty years, when slaves are released and land reverts to its original owner (Leviticus 25:8–55). In Kabbalah the Jubilee symbolizes *Binah*, the Divine Mother, who generally is characterized by the number fifty, based on BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, where Rav and Shemu'el teach: "Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world, all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6)." *Binah* is the source of redemption and liberation, specifically the Exodus from Egypt.

See *Zohar* 1:21b, 47b–48a; 2:46a, 83b, 85b; 3:262a.

669. **Some teach that all is one** That both forms of the letter ה (*he*) symbolize *Shekhinah*.

670. **when She radiates from Righteous One…** When *Shekhinah* receives the flow of emanation from *Yesod*, She is full.

671. **but when She does not stand full and sucks from the Other Side…** If, due to human sin, *Shekhinah* does not receive the flow from *Yesod*, Her light diminishes and She is vulnerable to the influence of the demonic realm.

672. **So sometimes the moon stands full and sometimes defective…** *Shekhinah* is symbolized by the moon, whose phases reflect supernal fullness and emptiness.

673. **Both this and that…** Both interpretations.

674. **Whoever bears this sign does not descend to Hell** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:8: "Rabbi Levi said, 'In the time to come, Abraham will be sitting at the door to Hell, and he will not let any circumcised Israelite descend there.'" Cf. *Zohar* 1:8a, 94a, 95b.

675. **not inserting it into a foreign domain** Not having illicit intercourse, especially with a non-Jew. See BT *Eruvin* 19a; *Zohar* 2:3b, 7a, 87b; 3:57b, 142a (IR), 266a.

Rabbi Abba's concern with sexual purity reflects the promiscuity prevalent in the Jewish community in thirteenth-century Castile. See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 51–54 (63–67); Baer, in *Zion* 2 (1937): 31–33, 36–44; idem, *History*, 1:250–63; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1371–72; Assis, "Sexual Behavior in Mediaeval Hispano-Jewish Society."

676. **betraying the name of the King** The mark of the covenant of circumcision is pictured as the letter י (*yod*), the initial letter of the name יהוה (*YHVH*). Illicit intercourse betrays the divine element carved in one's body.

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 56a, 60a, 95a–b; 2:3b, 36a, 87b, 216b; 3:13b, 142a (*IR*), 215b, 220a, 256a (*RM*), 266a; Wolfson, in *JQR* 78 (1987): 77–112; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48. Cf. *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 14, *Shemini* 8.

677. **sweeping through the world in four glides** According to 2 Kings 11:12, the prophet Elijah did not die a normal death but was carried off to heaven in a chariot of fire. See BT *Berakhot* 4b: "A *tanna* taught: 'Michael [reaches his destination] in one [glide], Gabriel in two, Elijah in four, and the Angel of Death in eight—in time of plague, however, in one.'"

Cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 8:7; *Targum Qohelet* 10:20; *Zohar* 1:13a, 46b.

678. **one must prepare another chair in honor of him** At a ritual circumcision, the chair of Elijah is placed at the right of the *sandaq* ("godfather") and left unoccupied. The *mohel* ("circumciser") declares in the opening prayer: "This is the chair of Elijah, may his memory be a blessing!"

679. **At first is written: *What are you doing here, Elijah?...*** According to *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29, when the Israelites neglected the commandment of circumcision, "Elijah, may his memory be a blessing, was passionately

zealous and adjured the heavens not to send down dew or rain upon the earth. [Queen] Jezebel heard and sought to kill him. Elijah immediately prayed before the blessed Holy One. The blessed Holy One said to him, 'Are you better than your ancestors? Jacob fled [from Esau] and escaped.... Moses fled [from Pharaoh] and escaped.... David fled [from Saul] and escaped...' Elijah immediately fled from the land of Israel and escaped [to Horeb].... The blessed Holy One appeared to him and said, *'What are you doing here, Elijah?'* (1 Kings 19:9). He answered, *'I have been very zealous* [*for YHVH, the God of Hosts, for the Children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant*]' (ibid., 10). The blessed Holy One said, 'You are always zealous! You were zealous in Shittim on account of sexual immorality [Numbers 25; Elijah is identified with Phinehas]..., and here, too, you are zealous. By your life! Israel will not enact the covenant of circumcision until you see it with your own eyes.' Because of this the sages ordained that a seat of honor be arranged [at every circumcision] for the Angel of the Covenant [Elijah; see Malachi 3:1]."

See *Halakhot Gedolot* (according to *Shibbolei ha-Leqet* 376:6); *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Wistinetzki, par. 585; *Zohar* 1:13a, 209b; 2:190a; *Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah* 265:11; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:338, n. 103.

680. **Why was Elijah punished...** Why was prophecy removed from him and transferred to his disciple, Elisha? In several rabbinic sources, Elijah is criticized for not defending Israel here. See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:6; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 8.

681. **they were still speaking words of Torah** Having continued throughout the night.

682. **Master of Covenant** Elijah, who is called "Angel of the Covenant" in *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29, based on Malachi 3:1. See above, note 679.

683. **wedding celebration** הלולא (*Hilula*). Circumcision initates the male into an intimate relationship with *Shekhinah*.

See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 17, where Abraham's circumcision is compared to marrying the king's daughter.

See *Zohar* 1:8a–b, 216a; and above, page 86: "Once he [Abraham] was [circumcised], he entered this ה (*he*), and *Shekhinah* inhered in him."

684. **all night long they engaged in Torah, and none of them slept** Ten anonymous speakers appear below. It later became customary for ten people to gather on the eve of a circumcision and stay awake all night. See *Midrash Tehillim* 92:7; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 19, and David Luria, ad loc., n. 24.

685. **בפרוע פרעות (*Biphro'a pera'ot*), *When uncoverings are uncovered…*** Literally the phrase apparently means *When lodes go untrimmed*, an expression of dedication (see Numbers 6:5). Here the anonymous speaker intends another meaning of the root: "uncover."

686. **What prompted Deborah and Barak…?** After their victory over Sisera, the Canaanite general.

687. **The world is erected only upon this covenant…** See BT *Shabbat* 137b: "Were it not for the blood of the covenant [of circumcision], heaven and earth would not endure, as is said: *Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth*." Cf. *Zohar* 1:32a, 56a, 59b, 66b, 89a, 91b.

The covenant symbolizes *Yesod* ("Foundation"), the divine phallus and cosmic pillar, also known as Righteous One. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Rabbi El'azar son of Shamu'a says, '[The world stands] on a single pillar named Righteous One, as is said: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world* (Proverbs 10:25).'" The verse in Proverbs, וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*), which means literally *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*.

See *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

688. **They failed to uncover and remained unrevealed** They failed to perform the second stage of the ritual of circumcision. First the foreskin is cut and removed, disclosing the mucous membrane, which is then torn down the center and pulled back, revealing the corona. The act of tearing and pulling back the membrane is called פריעה (*peri'ah*), "uncovering" the corona. See M *Shabbat* 19:6: "If one circumcises but does not uncover the circumcision, it is as if he has not circumcised."

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 32a (*Tos*), 32a–b, 96b, 98b (*ST*); 2:3b, 40a, 125b; 3:91b, 95b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 133; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67).

689. ***The Children of Israel abandoned YHVH...*** The verse reads: *They forgot YHVH*. See Judges 2:12–13; 10:6; *Zohar* 2:3b; 3:42b.

690. ***They abandoned YHVH*, literally!** A German Hasidic tradition identifies the mark of circumcision with the *yod* of יהוה (*YHVH*). By not uncovering the corona, one fails to complete the rite and reveal the symbol of the divine name.

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 56a, 95a–b; 2:36a, 40a, 216b; 3:142a (*IR*), 215b, 220a, 256a (*RM*); Wolfson, in *JQR* 78 (1987): 77–112; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48.

691. ***Circumcise the Children of Israel again, a second time!*** According to Joshua 5:5–7, the Israelite generation born during the years of wandering in the desert had not been circumcised. Therefore God commanded Joshua to circumcise them as they entered the land of Canaan. Here, however, the anonymous speaker offers a different interpretation, based on midrashic tradition. All the Israelites had been circumcised, but only partially: their foreskins had been removed, but their coronas were not yet uncovered. Now Joshua is commanded to complete the rite.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29: "Rabbi Yishma'el said, 'Did uncircumcised Israelites hear the voice of the blessed

Holy One on Mount Sinai and receive the Torah from Him? Heaven forbid! They were circumcised, but without *peri'ah* ("uncovering"), and whoever circumcises without uncovering the circumcision is as if he has not circumcised. When the Israelites came to the land of Israel, the blessed Holy One said to Joshua, "Don't you know that the Israelites are not circumcised properly? Go and circumcise them again, as is said: *Circumcise the Children of Israel a second time!*"""

692. **Until they were uncovered... they did not enter the land...** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 46:9: "Rabbi Yudan said, 'If your [Abraham's] children accept circumcision, they will enter the land; if not, they will not enter the land.'... Rabbi Berekhiah and Rabbi Ḥelbo said in the name of Rabbi Avin son of Rabbi Yose, '... [Joshua] said to them, "Do you think you can enter the land uncircumcised?!"'"

693. ***At an encampment on the way...*** On Moses' way back to Egypt from Midian.

694. **To kill whom? Moses** Commentators are divided over the identity of the intended victim: was it Moses or his infant son?

See *Mekhilta, Amaleq* (*Yitro*) 1; *Targum Yerushalmi*, ad loc.; *Shemot Rabbah* 5:8; BT *Nedarim* 31b–32a; JT *Nedarim* 3:14, 38b; Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Baḥya, ad loc.; *Zohar* 2:266b; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, ad loc., nn. 137, 143.

695. **Gabriel descended... assumed the guise...** See *Midrash Aggadah*, Exodus 4:24: "The blessed Holy One sent Uriel, who appeared to him as a serpent and swallowed up Moses from his head to his covenant [of circumcision, i.e., his phallus]."

See *Shemot Rabbah* 5:8; Rashi, ad loc.; and BT *Nedarim* 32a: "Rabbi Yehudah son of Bizna expounded, 'When Moses our Master neglected circumcision, Wrath and Anger came and swallowed him up, leaving only his feet [a euphemism for phallus]. Immediately, *Zipporah took a*

flint and cut off her son's foreskin (Exodus 4:25). Immediately, *He let him go* (ibid., 26).'"

696. **great and mighty serpent** Pharaoh. See Ezekiel 29:3: *Thus says Lord YHVH: I am confronting you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the mighty dragon sprawling in its streams*.

697. **he was saved** Moses was saved.

698. ***Zipporah took* צור (*tsor*), *a flint*** The verse reads: *Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin*.

699. **What is *tsor*? Healing** The speaker is playing with the similar-sounding word צרי (*tsori*), "balm," as in Jeremiah 8:22: *Is there no tsori, balm, in Gilead?*

700. **Holy Spirit sparkled within her** She was inspired to heal him by circumcising their son.

701. **When they came close he showed them the covenant of circumcision** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 93:6, 10; *Tanḥuma, Vayiggash* 5.

702. **because I preserved it** By refusing the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. See Genesis 39.

703. **whoever preserves this sign of cove nant is destined for royalty** Because of the intimate link between the covenant of circumcision and *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"). See *Zohar* 1:106b (*MhN*), 197a; *TZ* 15, 30b–31a.

704. ***As YHVH lives! Lie down until morning…*** Boaz was tempted to have intercourse with Ruth, but he overcame his sexual impulse by adjuring it. See *Rut Rabbah* 6:4: "Rabbi Yose said, 'There were three who were attacked by their impulse but girded themselves against it with an oath: Joseph, David, and Boaz.... How do we know this concerning Boaz? Because it is said: *As YHVH lives! Lie down until morning.'*... Rabbi Yehudah said, 'That whole night his impulse incited him, saying, "You are single, looking for a wife, and she is single, looking for a husband. Go have intercourse with her and she will be your wife!" He adjured his impulse, saying, "*As YHVH lives*, I will not touch her!" And to the woman he said, "*Lie down until morning.*"'"

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 88; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:11.

705. **progenitor of kings ruling all other kings** David and Solomon, who conquered other kingdoms, were descended from Boaz and Ruth. See Ruth 4:21–22.

706. **King Messiah—called by the name of the blessed Holy One** The Messiah is descended from David and according to Jeremiah 23:6 is named after God: *This is the name he will be called: YHVH our Vindicator*. See BT *Bava Batra* 75b.

707. **What is *be-zot?* Sign of the covenant, always accessible…** The word זאת (*zot*), "this," indicates the sign of circumcision, always "right here" in the body. See BT *Menaḥot* 43b: "Our Rabbis taught: 'Beloved are Israel, for the blessed Holy One surrounded them with *mitsvot: tefillin* on their heads, *tefillin* on their arms, tassels on their garments, a mezuzah on their door. Concerning these David said, *Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous laws* (Psalms 119:164). When he entered the bath and saw himself standing naked, he exclaimed, "Woe is me that I stand naked without any *mitsvah*!" As soon as he was reminded of the circumcision in his flesh, his mind was set at ease.'"

708. **intimating above** Symbolizing *Shekhinah*, who is linked with *Yesod*, the divine phallus. As the Divine Presence, She is known as *Zot* (*This*). See *Zohar* 1:72a; 2:51a, 57a; 3:31a.

709. **all on one rung** Both *zot* and covenant symbolize the rung of *Shekhinah*. Alternatively, both *Shekhinah* and *Yesod* share in the name "Covenant." See below.

710. **זה (*Zeh*), This, and זאת (*zot*), this, occupy one rung inseparably** The masculine and feminine forms of the word allude to the divine couple, *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*, who share in the covenant. See *Zohar* 1:215b; 2:37b, 39b, 50b; 3:31a, 250a.

711. **everyone else in the world is similar. Why David alone…?** Everyone who is circumcised is linked with *Shekhinah*. So why did David declare that he—in particular—trusts in Her?

712. **Because She is linked to him…** King David is intimately linked with this *sefirah*, also known as *Malkhut* (“Kingdom”), and his royalty derives from Her.

713. **King David did not preserve this *zot* properly** David failed to preserve the covenant when he slept with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite. See 2 Samuel 11–12.

714. **kingdom withdrew from him all that time** When he was forced to flee from his rebellious son Absalom. See 2 Samuel 15–20; *Zohar* 1:151b.

715. **from that with which you were bonded you will be detached!…** David’s intimate link with *Malkhut* (“Kingdom”) was ruined by his sexual sin. Consequently She abandoned him, divesting him of kingship. See *Zohar* 3:23b–24a.

716. **Dumah** Literally, “silence,” a name for the netherworld in the Bible, as in this verse. Cf. Psalms 115:17.

In rabbinic literature Dumah is the angel in charge of souls of the dead (BT *Berakhot* 18b, *Shabbat* 152b, *Sanhedrin* 94a). In the *Zohar* he retains this role but also oversees Hell. See 1:8a–b, 102a, 124a (*MhN*), 237b.

717. **This sign** The sign of circumcision.

718. **dazzling demons ppnu** טהירין (*Tehirin*), from the Aramaic root meaning “brightness, noon.” One class of demons is named טהרי (*tiharei*), “noonday demons.”

See Psalms 91:6 and Rashi, ad loc.; *Targum*, Song of Songs 4:6; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 6:24, Deuteronomy 32:24; *Zohar* 1:125a, 130b, 198b, 200a, 232b (*Tos*); 2:130a–b, 195b, 205a, 207a. The Hebrew root טהר (*thr*), “pure,” lends this demonic name a euphemistic tone.

719. **he is not handed over to Dumah to descend to Hell** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:8: “Rabbi Levi said, ‘In the time to come, Abraham will be sitting at the door to Hell, and he will not let any circumcised Israelite de scend there.’” Cf. BT *Eruvin* 19a; *Zohar* 1:8a, 93a, 95b.

720. **for he is linked with the name of the blessed Holy One** See above, note 690.

721. אותו **(*oto*), *Himself, and His abode*** As David flees Jerusalem, he says this to the priest Zadok. The literal meaning of the phrase is either *Himself and His abode, it* (the ark) *and its abode,* or *it and His abode*. These alternatives are interrelated, since the ark is the abode of the Divine Presence.

722. **he was being punished this way** By being divested of kingship and banished from Jerusalem. See above, page 94.

723. **no longer called righteous** Only one who preserves the covenant of circumcision is called "righteous," linked with *Yesod,* the divine phallus, known as Righteous One. See *Zohar* 1:59b, 247b.

724. **What is *oto*? 'Sign' of the holy covenant** The anonymous speaker understands אותו (*oto*) not as: *Himself*, but as: *His sign*. A similar midrashic reading appears in *Shemot Rabbah* 1:20; see *Zohar* 1:47b, 112b; 3:184a.

725. **For these two—Kingdom and Jerusalem—are linked with this** See above, page 94.

726. **so that Kingdom of this 'sign' would be restored to its site** So *Malkhut* ("Kingdom") would be reunited with *Yesod*.

727. **The verse should read: *from my being*** The entire structure of the human being—not merely the flesh—is created in the divine image and reveals the glory of God.

728. **However, *from my flesh*, literally!** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:2: "*From my flesh I will see God.* [Abraham said,] 'If I had not done so [circumcised myself], how would the blessed Holy One have been revealed to me?'"

729. ***The flesh of holiness... My covenant will be in your flesh*** Both references to *flesh* are understood as indicating the site of circumcision. "Flesh" is a biblical euphemism for "phallus"; see Leviticus 15:2; Ezekiel 16:26; 23:20.

730. **As long as a person is inscribed... he sees the blessed Holy One...** See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-*

Qodesh, 2–3 (5).

731. **not having preserved this sign** Succumbing to illicit sexual temptation.

732. **inscription of the blessed Holy One** The mark of circumcision symbolizes the *yod* of יהוה (*YHVH*). See above, note 690.

733. **When he is married** See BT *Sotah* 17a: "Rabbi Akiva expounded: 'איש ואשה (*Ish ve-ishshah*), "Man and woman": If they are worthy, *Shekhinah* abides between them; if not, fire consumes them.'" As indicated by Rashi (ad loc.), the two Hebrew words איש ואשה (*ish ve-ishshah*), "man and woman," share the letters א (*alef*) and ש (*shin*), which spell אש (*esh*), "fire"; in addition each contains one of the two letters of the divine name יה (*Yah*). Without divinity between them, only fire remains.

734. **this sign enters its site** When he unites with his wife.

735. **Why do ו ה (*vav, he*) go together?** In the name יהוה (*YHVH*), as well as in the alphabet.

736. **one is male and one is female** The letter ו (*vav*), whose numerical value is six, symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who is surrounded by five other *sefirot* (*Ḥesed* through *Yesod*). The letter ה (*he*), often a feminine marker, symbolizes *Tif'eret's* female partner, *Shekhinah*.

737. **אל (*El*), God, flowing forth from supernal Wisdom** The name אל (*El*) symbolizes *Ḥesed*, which emanates from *Ḥokhmah* ("Wisdom"). See *Zohar* 2:175b; 3:30b–31a, 65a.

738. **crowned by male, so female is rendered fragrant** *Ḥesed* is consummated by *Tif'eret*, who then sweetens *Shekhinah*, normally influenced by severe judgment from the left side.

739. **אלוה (*Eloah*), *God*, is: אל (*El*), God...** This divine name comprises *Ḥesed* (radiating from *Ḥokhmah*), *Tif'eret*, and *Shekhinah*.

740. **why are you dwelling here?** In Kefar Tarsha (Clod Village). Their astounding knowledge of Torah deserves finer surroundings. See above, note 631.

741. **glistening rivers enlighten us with Torah…** See BT *Horayot* 12a: “Rabbi Me-sharsheya said to his sons, ‘… When you study, study by a river, so as the waters flow, your teachings may flow. Better to sit on the dunghills of Mata Meḥasya than in the palaces of Pumbedita.’” According to *Zohar* 1:101a–b (*MhN*), Kefar Tarsha was renamed Mata Meḥasya.

742. **This place was once condemned above…** According to *Zohar* 1:101a–b (*MhN*), a plague ravaged Kefar Tarsha, apparently for the crime of neglecting the study of Torah. When its sinful residents turned back to God, they devoted themeselves to constant study.

743. **Whoever departs from here is like one who departs from eternal life** See BT *Qiddushin* 66b, where Rabbi Tarfon says to Rabbi Akiva, “Akiva, whoever departs from you is as though he departs from life!”

744. **Ordained smoke grasped on earth!** באר֝א אתפסת קוטרא דהורמנא (*Qutra de-hurmana be-ar’a ittepisat*). *Qutra* means both “knot” and “smoke” in the *Zohar*. See 1:15a, 30a, 33b, 161b, 172a; 2:80a, 124a; 3:45b, 51a–b, 107a, 289b, 295b (*IZ*). *Hurmana* means “decree, authority.” See BT *Berakhot* 58a; *Zohar* 1:15a, 76b (*ST*), 97a (*ST*), 108a (*ST*), 109b (*ST*), 147a (*Tos*); 2:123a; *ZḤ* 67c (*ShS*), 121d. The phrase קוטרא דהורמנותא (*qutra de-hurmanuta*) appears in *ZḤ* 67c (*ShS*); cf. 3:270b (*Mat*).

Apparently, Rabbi Abba means that the fire decreed above has been perceived and predicted by the prophetic children.

745. **encompassed by fire** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 16:4: “Ben Azzai was sitting and expounding, and fire was blazing around him.” Cf. BT *Ḥagigah* 14b: “Rabbi El’azar son of Arakh opened, expounding the work of the Chariot, and fire

descended from heaven, encompassing all the trees in the field." See *Zohar* 3:287b (*IZ*).

746. **Rabbi Abba's face blazed in fire…** For similar descriptions, see *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 13; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 2; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Ḥuqqat*, add. 1; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 1:1; 21:12.

747. **house was swathed in smoke** See Exodus 19:18: *Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for YHVH had descended upon it in fire*.

748. **fresh and ecstatic…** חדתאן (*Ḥadtan*), meaning "new" but apparently also implying חדאן (*ḥadan*), "joyous." See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 16:4: "Ben Azzai was sitting and expounding, and fire was blazing around him. They [his disciples] came and told Rabbi Akiva…. He went to him and said, 'Perhaps you are engaged in the chambers of the Chariot [the secrets of Ezekiel's vision of the Chariot].' He replied, 'No, I am stringing words of Torah to the Prophets, and words of the Prophets to the Writings, and the words of Torah are as joyous as on the day they were given from Sinai.'"

See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 58; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Yitro* 7; *Ki Tavo* 3.

749. **they did not know if it was day or night** This ecstatic description derives from a story about Rabbi Eli'ezer: When he expounded Torah, "no one knew if it was day or night." See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 13; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 2, and David Luria, ad loc., n. 16. Cf. Ibn Ezra on Zechariah 14:7; *Zohar* 2:15a (*MhN*), 105b.

750. **wedding celebration** הלולא (*Hilula*). Circumcision initates the male into an intimate relationship with *Shekhinah*. See above, note 683.

751. **one within the other, one above the other** Symbolizing ever deeper, higher realms of divinity. Cf. *Zohar* 1:129b–130a.

752. ***Your courts… Zion… Jerusalem…*** Zion and Jerusalem symbolize *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*, the first stages of

sefirotic ascent. See *Zohar* 2:57b, 83a; cf. 1:248b; 2:79b.

753. ***By wisdom a house is built*** The primordial point of Wisdom emanates the *house* of *Binah*, source of the lower seven *sefirot*.

754. ***A river issues from Eden to water the garden*** The emanation of *Binah* streams from *Ḥokhmah*, watering *the garden* of *Shekhinah*.

755. **כל ,י ,ה (*He yod kol*), this and that, 'all' consummated as one** The word היכל (*heikhal*), *temple*, comprises *Binah* (symbolized by the ה [*he*] of יהוה [*YHVH*]), *Ḥokhmah* (symbolized by the primordial point, י [*yod*]), and the word כל (*kol*), "all," signifying their union and the sefirotic totality.

756. **When a person brings his son as an offering…** The anonymous speaker sees the ritual of circumcision as a sacrificial offering. See above, note 656.

757. **He desires him** God desires the newborn.

758. **accommodating him in two chambers** Initiating him into the *courts* of divinity *Shekhinah* and *Yesod*.

759. **he** possesses That is, the newborn.

760. **this place** Kefar Tarsha.

761. **they would open by proclaiming…** It became customary to recite this verse at the beginning of the ritual of circumcision.

762. **by him** By the father.

763. **he would say** That is, the father.

764. **'who has sanctified us with His commandments…'** The blessing begins: "Blessed are You, *YHVH* our God, King of the world."

765. **'As you have initiated him into the covenant…'** The response continues: "so may you merit to initiate him into Torah, the wedding canopy, and good deeds." The blessing and response derive from BT *Shabbat* 137b.

766. **First, a person should pray for himself, then for another** Just as the respondents first pray, "*May we be*

sated…" before saying, "As you have initiated him into the covenant, so may you merit to initiate him into Torah, the wedding canopy, and good deeds."

Cf. BT *Bava Qamma* 92a, where the opposite sequence is recommended: "Whoever seeks compassion for his fellow, while he himself needs the same thing, will be answered first."

767. ***he will make atonement for himself*, first; then…** See BT *Yoma* 44a: "*He will make atonement for himself and for his household and for the whole congregation of Israel*. His own atonement precedes the atonement for *his household*, and the atonement for *his household* precedes the atonement for his fellow priests, and the atonement for his fellow priests precedes the atonement for *the whole congregation of Israel*."

768. **this custom** The custom of the ancient *ḥasidim*.

769. **ten canopies that the blessed Holy One intends to erect…** The anonymous speaker here combines two separate traditions reported in BT *Bava Batra* 75a: "Rabbah said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, 'The blessed Holy One will someday erect seven canopies for every single righteous person.' … Rabbi Ḥama son of Rabbi Ḥanina said, 'The blessed Holy One erected ten canopies for Adam in the Garden of Eden, as it is said: *You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone* [*was your adornment: carnelian, chrysolite, and amethyst; beryl, lapis lazuli, and jasper; sapphire, turquoise, emerald, and gold*] (Ezekiel 28:13).'" The ten gems suggest ten canopies.

A similar combination appears in *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:138).

770. **all tied to this** All connected with this verse.

771. **so ten words of faith appear in this verse…** The Hebrew verse contains ten words, each one alluding to one of the canopies and to one of the ten *sefirot*, the realm of mystical faith.

772. **as if you yourselves stood at Mount Sinai…** See above, note 748.

773. **Whoever brings his son as this offering…** Circumcision is the ideal sacrifice. See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (68); *Zohar* 2:66b; above, note 656.

774. **one should arrange an altar in a vessel filled with earth…** So that the foreskin is covered with dust. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29: "One covers the foreskin and blood with the dust of the earth."

Cf. David Luria, ad loc., n. 52; idem, *Qadmut Sefer ha-Zohar*, 15; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 23:10; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (68); *Zohar* 3:44a (*Piq*), 257a (*RM*); *TZ, Haqdamah*, 11a; *NZ*, 1:95a, n. 2; *Maḥazor Vitri* 505 (625); Ibn Yarḥi, *Sefer ha-Manhig, Hilkhot Milah*, 127; David Abudarham, *Sefer Abudarham, milah;* Joseph Karo, *Beit Yosef, Yoreh De'ah* 265:10.

According to Leviticus 17:13, the blood of an animal that has been hunted and killed must be covered with the dust of the earth.

775. **What does this mean: *I record My name*? Circumcision** According to *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 14, *Shemini* 8, the mark of circumcision is identified with the י (*yod*) of the divine name שדי (*Shaddai*). A German Hasidic tradition identifies the mark with the *yod* of יהוה (*YHVH*).

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 56a, 95a–b; 2:36a, 216b; 3:142a (*IR*), 215b, 220a, 256a (*RM*); Wolfson, in *JQR* 78 (1987): 77–112; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48.

776. ***The secret of YHVH… His covenant*** See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 19: "*The secret of YHVH is for those in awe of Him; to them He reveals His covenant*. Which secret did He reveal to *those in awe of Him?* Circumcision, for the blessed Holy One revealed the mystery of circumcision only to Abraham…, to whom was said: *For you are in awe of God* (Genesis 22:12)." Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:2.

777. ***If you make an altar of stones for Me*** The verse continues: *do not build it hewn, for by wielding your*

tool upon it you defile it.

778. **One must introduce him to worshiping the blessed Holy One** See BT *Yevamot* 47a–b.

779. **One should rejoice in this share** Appreciating the blessed gift of the *mitsvah* of circumcision.

780. ***El Shaddai*** "God of *Shaddai*." *Shaddai* is an obscure divine name, which may mean "of the mountain." The traditional rendering "Almighty God" is unjustified.

781. **first, שנה (*shanah*), *year*, and then שנים (*shanim*), *years*** The phrase תשעים שנה (*tish'im shanah*), *ninety years*, employs the normally singular form שנה (*shanah*), literally "year." The anonymous speaker subjects this idiomatic usage to a hyperliteral reading, insisting on the singular connotation.

782. ***appeared* is not written** Actually the identical expression, *YHVH appeared to Abram*, occurs in Genesis 12:7. See above, page 74; *Zohar* 1:98a.

783. **obstructed and concealed** Uncircumcised, still covered by the foreskin. See above, pages 90–91; *Zohar* 2:36a.

784. **did not reveal Himself to him fittingly** See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 20: "*Abram fell on his face* [*and God spoke with him*] (Genesis 17:3). Until he was circumcised, whenever *Shekhinah* spoke with him, he fell down. Once he was circumcised, He spoke with him while he was standing, as is said: *Abraham remained standing in the presence of YHVH* (ibid. 18:22). Further, He revealed Himself to him even while he was sitting, as is said: *YHVH appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre* [*as he was sitting at the opening of the tent*] (ibid., 1)."

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29: "Rabban Gamliel son of Rabbi Yehudah the Prince said, '… The blessed Holy One said to the ministering angels, "Come and see the power of circumcision. Before Abraham was circumcised, he fell and then I spoke with him, as is said: *Abram fell on his face* [*and God spoke with him*]. Now that he is circumcised, he sits

and I stand, as is said: *He was sitting at the opening of the tent* (ibid. 18:1), and it is written: *He raised his eyes and saw: here, three men standing over him* (ibid. 18:2).”’”

785. **this sign, the holy crown** In the ritual of circumcision, first the foreskin is removed, disclosing the mucous membrane, which is then torn down the center and pulled back, revealing the corona. The removal of the foreskin symbolizes *Yesod*, the divine phallus, while uncovering the corona symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is known as *Atarah* (“Corona, Crown”). Here the word for “crown” is not עטרה (*atarah*) but כתר (*keter*), which also alludes to *Shekhinah* (above, page 94).

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 32a (*Tos*), 91b, 96b, 98b (*ST*); 3:91b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 133. On Abraham and uncovering the corona, see BT *Yevamot* 71b; *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *sof milah*; Rashi on Genesis 17:25; *Zohar* 3:163b. On *Shekhinah* as corona of the phallus, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 274–75, n. 14, 357–68; idem, “Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah”; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 85–92.

786. **He was also about to generate from him holy seed...** Isaac. See *Maḥazor Vitri*, 507: “Until Abraham was circumcised, he did not engender holy seed.”

787. **for his days were not days** Because Abraham was uncircumcised, his life was deficient.

788. **Now that he arrived here...** Now, as he was about to be circumcised, his entire life was fulfilled.

789. **lower crowns, unholy, below** Demonic forces, parallel to the *sefirot*—which are holy crowns.

790. **ש׳ ד׳ (*shin, dalet*)—nothing more** Spelling שד (*shed*), “demon.” See *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 14; David ben Judah he-Ḥasid, *Mar’ot ha-Ẓove’ot*, 70.

791. **enter under the wings of *Shekhinah*** The phrase usually applies to conversion. See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 32; BT *Shabbat* 31a; *Zohar* 1:13a; 3:14a. Cf. Ruth 2:12.

792. **The holy mark י (*yod*) is revealed in them... שדי (*Shaddai*)...** According to *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 14, *Shemini* 8, the mark of circumcision is identified with the י (*yod*) of the divine name שדי (*Shaddai*). Here the *yod* transforms the word שד (*shed*), "demon," into שדי (*Shaddai*).

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 56a, 89a; 2:36a, 216b; 3:142a (*IR*), 215b, 220a, 256a (*RM*); Wolfson, in *JQR* 78 (1987): 77–112; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48.

793. **The one from whom blessings issue...** *Yesod*.

794. **he does not descend to Hell** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:8: "Rabbi Levi said, 'In the time to come, Abraham will be sitting at the door to Hell, and he will not let any circumcised Israelite descend there.'" Cf. BT *Eruvin* 19a; *Zohar* 1:8a; above, pages 88, 94.

795. **All those who are circumcised are called *righteous*...** Through the act of circumcision, one imitates *Yesod*, the divine phallus—known as Righteous One—who unites with *Shekhinah*, symbolized by *the land.* All those who are circumcised escape Hell and attain *Shekhinah*.

The verse from Isaiah, appearing frequently in the *Zohar*, is cited in M *Sanhedrin* 10:1 to demonstrate that "all of Israel have a share in the world that is coming."

796. **Of you is written: *This one will say*...** Rabbi Abba may be applying the three parts of the verse to the three last speakers.

797. **that land called Land of the Living** *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:65b–66a, 115a, 124b, 143b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh,* 62 (77).

798. **manna of holy dew** Symbolizing the emanation from above. See *Zohar* 2:61b, 62b. Cf. 1:143b, 225b, 232a; 2:176b (*SdTs*), 210a; 3:128b (*IR*), 135a-b (*IR*), 288a (*IZ*), 292b (*IZ*).

799. **supernal land, regulating all supernal life...** *Shekhinah*, who conveys the vivifying flow of emanation.

800. ***a land that YHVH your God looks after*** She is cared for by Her spouse, *Tif'eret*.

801. ***where you will not lack* כל (*kol*), *anything*, precisely!** *Shekhinah* contains the entirety of emanation, conveyed to Her by *Yesod*, known as *kol*, "everything, anything."

802. **the blessed Holy One, as is said: *My firstborn son is Israel*** *Tif'eret* (the blessed Holy One), whose full name is *Tif'eret Yisra'el*, "Beauty of Israel," is the son of higher sefirotic parents. See *Zohar* 1:124b, 223b.

803. **all freedom comes from Jubilee** In the Bible every seventh year is a Sabbatical, during which the land must lie fallow and at the end of which all debts are remitted (Leviticus 25:1–24; Deuteronomy 15:1–3). After seven Sabbaticals comes the Jubilee, proclaimed every fifty years, when slaves are released and land reverts to its original owner (Leviticus 25:8–55).

In Kabbalah the Jubilee symbolizes *Binah*, the Divine Mother, who generally is characterized by the number fifty, based on BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, where Rav and Shemu'el teach: "Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world, all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6)." *Binah* is the source of redemption and liberation, specifically the Exodus from Egypt. See *Zohar* 1:21b, 47b–48a; 2:46a, 83b, 85b, 93a; 3:262a.

804. **So, *son of freedom*** *Tif'eret* is the son of *Binah* (Jubilee).

805. ***son of* חורין (*ḥorin*), *free ones*, not *son of* חירות (*ḥerut*), *freedom*** The verse actually reads: *son of* חורים (*ḥorim*), a Hebrew equivalent of the Aramaized form חורין (*ḥorin*). The question is: If King *Tif'eret* is the son of *Binah*, who is symbolized by freedom, why the plural form *ḥorin, free ones*?

806. **our concealed Mishnah** The *Zohar* often cites teachings from a secret, mystical Mishnah known only to its own circle. See *Zohar* 1:37b, 55b, 74a, 91b, 93a, 96a, 224a, 252a (*Hash*); 3:57b, 61b, 78a, 284b, 285a. This is to be

distinguished from the *Matnitin* of the *Zohar*, on which see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216.

807. **When י (*yod*) unites with ה (*he*), then this verse is fulfilled…** The י (*yod*) of יהוה (*YHVH*) symbolizes the primordial point of *Ḥokhmah* (Divine Father), while the next letter, ה (*he*), a feminine marker, symbolizes *Binah* (Divine Mother). Their union generates the flow of emanation watering the garden of *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 3:10b.

808. **Do not say: 'when they unite,' but rather: 'they unite,' literally!** Do not imagine that the union of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah* is intermittent; it is constant, as indicated by the present tense: *A river issues*. See *Zohar* 2:83a: "Therefore it is written: *issues—issues* incessantly." Cf. 3:65b: "It is written: *A river issues from Eden—issues*, not *issued*."

On the perpetual union of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, see 1:123a, 153b; 2:11b; 3:4a, 78a.

809. **So it is written: *son of ḥorin, free ones*** The plural indicates both *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*.

810. ***and whose princes…*** The *princes* of *Shekhinah* (the *land*) are either angelic powers beneath Her or the virtuous among Israel.

811. **this one below** Earth.

812. **All other lands of other nations were granted…** According to rabbinic tradition, the seventy nations of the world are governed by seventy angels or heavenly princes appointed by God.

See Daniel 10:20; Septuagint, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; lubilees 15:31–32; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 11:8, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; *Tanḥuma, Re'eh* 8; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 9:19; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 24; *Zohar* 1:46b, 108b; 3:298b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:204–5, n. 91.

813. **he of whom is written: *I was a child*… the Prince of the World** Metatron, the chief angel, also known as נער (*na'ar*), the "child," "lad," or heavenly "servant." See BT *Yevamot* 16b: "Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥman said in

the name of Rabbi Yonatan, 'This verse was spoken by the Prince of the World: *I was a child and now I am old*. Who spoke it? If you suggest the blessed Holy One, does He age? Then perhaps David spoke it; but was he so old? You must conclude that the Prince of the World spoke it.'"

See *Tosafot, Yevamot* 16b, s.v. *pasuq zeh; Zohar* 1:124b, 143a, 162a–b, 181b; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 379–80; Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 89–90.

814. **Woe to the world, sucking from this side!** Sucking from Metatron and not directly from *Shekhinah*.

815. **like one who sucks from an alien power** In exile, Israel is deprived of direct divine sustenance and is nourished only by the demonic realm.

See *Sifra, Behar* 5:4, 109c: "Every Israelite who dwells in the land of Israel accepts upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and everyone who leaves the land is like an idol worshiper."

See *Tosefta, Avodah Zarah* 4:5; BT *Ketubbot* 110b; *Zohar* 1:153a, 177a; 2:152b; 3:266b.

See BT *Ta'anit* 10a: "The land of Israel is watered by the blessed Holy One Himself, while the rest of the world is watered by a messenger…. The land of Israel drinks water directly from the rain, while the rest of the world drinks of the drippings."

816. ***And whose princes*** The princes of this world are the heavenly powers appointed over the seventy nations.

817. **When the sun begins to shine…** See BT *Berakhot* 7a: "It was taught in the name of Rabbi Me'ir: 'When the sun begins to shine and all the kings of the East and West put on their crowns and bow down to the sun, immediately the blessed Holy One turns angry.'" Cf. *Zohar* 2:188a.

818. **at the time of afternoon prayer wrath looms over the world** As evening approaches, the power of strict Judgment strengthens. See *Zohar* 1:132b, 230a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:963.

819. **Who causes this?… that one called *child*** Metatron, who, unlike *Shekhinah*, conveys only a fraction of emanation. See *Zohar* 1:124b.

820. **holy ones of the Most High** In Daniel 7:18, the phrase refers to Israel; here, to the virtuous illuminati of Kefar Tarsha. See *Zohar* 1:67b, 77a.

821. **from this side** From Metatron.

822. **from that holy site above** From *Shekhinah*.

823. **It should be called *rebuke*** In Isaiah's parable, the vineyard symbolizes Israel, who has yielded bad fruit and will be punished. See verses 3–7.

824. **the word should be: לדודי (*le-dodi*), *for my lover*, as is written…** The more common word, *dodi*, appears immediately afterward and often in the Song of Songs, where it is understood midrashically as referring to God, Israel's lover.

825. **I have searched through the entire Torah…** Rabbi Abba understands the phrase *qeren ben shemen* as a place-name. His exhaustive search is modeled on midrashic exegesis. See *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 1:1; *Bereshit Rabbah* 85:7; 100:6; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 7:1; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 13; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 16; *Zohar* 3:71b.

826. **Companions have already established these verses…** See BT *Sukkah* 49a; *Tanḥuma, Vayelekh* 2.

827. **Isaac, who was *beloved*, called *beloved* before issuing into the world** According to BT *Shabbat* 137b, the blessing over circumcision includes the phrase: "who sanctified the beloved one from the womb." Rashi interprets this as a reference to Isaac. See *Zohar* 3:39b; Genesis 22:2; *Ba'al ha-Turim* on Genesis 17:2.

828. **circumcised, called 'complete,' augmented by ה (*he*) for consummation** God's covenant with Abraham was marked both by the sign of circumcision and a change of name (Genesis 17). With the addition of the letter ה (*he*), the patriarch's name was changed from אברם (*Avram*) to אברהם (*Avraham*). His new name and circumcision rendered

him complete, as indicated by Genesis 17:1: *Walk in My presence and be complete*. Further, the full name אברהם (*Avraham*) is numerically equivalent to 248, the total number of limbs in the human body (actually joints or bones covered with flesh and sinews, indicating that now Abraham attained mastery over all his limbs. See M *Oholot* 1:8; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 16; BT *Nedarim* 32b.

829. **Similarly, with Sarah: this ה (*he*) was bestowed upon her** Her name was changed from שרי (*Sarai*) to שרה (*Sarah*). See Genesis 17:15.

830. **For Sarah, ה (*he*) is appropriate, but for Abraham…** The letter ה (*he*) is a feminine marker and symbolizes the divine feminine, *Shekhinah*, so it befits Sarah. Abraham, however, should have been given the letter י (*yod*), a masculine prefix. See *ZḤ* 72b (*ShS*).

831. **supernal ה (*he*), World of the Male** *Binah* is symbolized by the first ה (*he*) in the name יהוה (*YHVH*). Although often depicted as the Divine Mother, *Binah* is also described as "World of the Male," encompassing the entire configuration of *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*. Together they constitute a masculine entity ready to join *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:147a, 149a, 160b, 246a–247a, 248b; 2:127b; *ZḤ* 72b (*ShS*). Cf. 1:17b, 46b, 163a; 2:4a.

832. **Higher *he* and lower he…** *Binah* and *Shekhinah;* the former is dependent on the masculine *sefirah* of *Ḥokhmah* and shares His masculinity, while the latter is entirely female.

833. **כה (*Koh*), *So, shall your seed be…*** The verse reads: *He took him* [*Abraham*] *outside and said: 'Look now toward heaven and count the stars, if you can count them.' Then He said to him, 'So shall your seed be.'*

In Kabbalah *Koh* ("so, thus, here") is a name of *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence. Rabbi Abba may be implying that the numerical value of כה (*Koh*), 25, is the product of ה (*he*) times ה (*he*), 5 × 5. Through circumcision the prototypical convert, Abraham, entered the covenant of *Shekhinah*. All future converts who are circumcised enter Her as well and

become children of Abraham, "*your seed*, literally." See above, 90b; *Zohar* 3:148a; Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 12a–13a.

834. **'convert of Righteousness'...** Convert of *Shekhinah*, who is known as Righteousness. Converts partake of *Shekhinah* but ascend no higher. See Judah Halevi, *Kuzari* 1:27; *Zohar* 1:13a; 2:87a; 3:14a–b.

835. **is called thus: Abraham** It was customary for converts to adopt the name Abraham or be called "son (or daughter) of Abraham."

836. **if *he* had not been transmitted to Sarah...** Without her *he*, Abraham's sole he would have symbolized *Shekhinah* (*So*), who engenders below, outside the sefirotic realm.

837. **Once *he* was transmitted to Sarah, the two *he*'s joined as one...** Now, since Sarah's *he* symbolizes *Shekhinah*, Abraham's *he* symbolizes *Binah*. Through their union they engender above.

838. **What issued from them is י (*yod*)** Whose numerical value is 10, equal to ה (*he*) plus ה (*he*), 5 + 5.

839. **so *yod* is the first letter of יצחק (*Yitsḥaq*), Isaac—male** The letter *yod*, a masculine prefix, characterizes Isaac. See *Zohar* 3:142a (*IR*).

840. **From here the male begins to expand** Isaac symbolizes *Gevurah*, the extension of the masculine configuration of *sefirot* known as *Ze'eir Anpin* ("Impatient One"), which begins with *Ḥesed*. The letter י (*yod*) is linked with *Ḥesed* in *Zohar* 2:36a; 3:142a (*IR*).

841. ***through Isaac*, not through you** Through Isaac, who was born to a circumcised father, not through you, born to one uncircumcised.

842. **Isaac engendered above...** Isaac engendered Jacob, who attained *Tif'eret* (symbolized by *truth*) and harmonized the opposite qualities of *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*.

843. **Was Abraham linked here, no higher?** Did Abraham attain only the rung of *Shekhinah?*

844. ***Ḥesed, loving-kindness, to Abraham*** The continuation of the verse just cited: *You give truth to Jacob, loving-kindness to Abraham*. Through discovering God and expressing love, Abraham eventually attained the rung of *Ḥesed* ("Love"). See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); above, pages 18–19, 29.

845. **from here he began** See above, pages 16–18, 32–34.

846. **So Abraham was circumcised only at the age of ninety-nine** Verging on one hundred, which symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who includes ten aspects of all ten *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 2:127a; 3:179a, 254a (*RM*).

847. **established in our Mishnah** The *Zohar* often cites teachings from a secret, mystical Mishnah known only to its own circle. See 1:37b, 55b, 74a, 91b, 93a, 95b, 224a, 252a (*Hash*); 3:57b, 61b, 78a, 284b, 285a. This is to be distinguished from the *Matnitin* of the *Zohar*, on which see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216.

848. **Isaac—severe Judgment… while for engendering he was called *Ḥesed*** Isaac symbolizes the *sefirah* of *Gevurah*, or *Din* (severe "Judgment"); but in engendering Jacob, he tended toward *Ḥesed* ("Love").

849. **their shares above** *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*.

850. **from below to above** Toward *Tif'eret*, the site of Jacob.

851. ***Israel*… blended colors…** Jacob—known as Israel—combined the white of *Ḥesed*, the red of *Gevurah*, and the green of *Tif'eret*.

852. **So here appears *song… a song*—indeed!** Signifying celebration, not rebuke. See above, page 107.

853. **called to engender male, called so before issuing into the world** Isaac was destined to engender Jacob, who symbolizes consummation.

854. ***Let me sing for my beloved*—Abraham** … See BT *Menaḥot* 53b: "Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'When the Temple was destroyed, the blessed Holy One found Abraham

standing there. He said to him, *'What is My beloved doing in My house?'* He replied, 'I have come concerning my children.'"

855. **Abraham inherited this allotted share** Abraham, *My beloved*, attained *Ḥesed*.

856. ***This is my lover; my lover is radiant and ruddy*** The Midrash on Song of Songs interprets this *lover* as God. Here the *lover* is *Tif'eret* (the blessed Holy One), who is both *radiant* and *ruddy*, harmonizing *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*.

857. ***My beloved* embraces *my lover*, male, and from him a vineyard is sown...** *Gevurah* (symbolized by Isaac, *my beloved*) joins *Tif'eret* (the blessed Holy One, *my lover*), sowing the vineyard of Israel. See Isaiah 5:7.

858. **It begins *on the horn of Jubilee*** In the Bible every seventh year is a Sabbatical, during which the land must lie fallow and at the end of which all debts are remitted (Leviticus 25:1–24; Deuteronomy 15:1–3). After seven Sabbaticals comes the Jubilee, proclaimed every fifty years, when slaves are released and land reverts to its original owner (Leviticus 25:8–55).

In Kabbalah the Jubilee symbolizes *Binah*, the Divine Mother, who generally is characterized by the number fifty, based on BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, where Rav and Shemu'el teach: "Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world, all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6)." *Binah* is the source of redemption and liberation, specifically the Exodus from Egypt. See *Zohar* 1:21b, 47b–48a 2:46a, 83b, 85b, 93a, 95b; 3:262a.

The horn of Jubilee is *Shekhinah*, intimately linked with the vineyard of Israel. See *Zohar* 2:123a, 179a (*SdTs*); 3:19b.

859. **What is *ben shamen, son of oil*?... בן חורין (*ben ḥorin*), *son of free ones*** *Tif'eret*, generated by the flow of emanation from *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*. See above, pages 104–6, where He is described as *son of free ones*, namely, the divine parents: *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*.

860. **kindling lamps** Kindling the lower *sefirot*.

861. **So royalty is always anointed with a horn…** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 10:8: “Kings are anointed only out of a horn. Saul and Jehu were anointed out of a flask, so their kingdoms were transient; David and Solomon were anointed out of a horn, so their kingdom was everlasting.” Here the horn symbolizes *Shekhinah*, with whom David was intimately linked.

See 1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 9:1–3; JT *Sheqalim* 6:1, 49d; BT *Horayot* 12a; *Zohar* 2:179a (*SdTs*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 71–72 (90)

862. ויעזקהו **(*Vay’azzeqehu*), *He enclosed it*,…like** עזקא **(*izqa*), a ring…** God protected Israel on all sides. See Rashi and Radak, ad loc.

863. **removing from it and its share all those princes…** Removing from Israel and *Shekhinah* the seventy heavenly princes who control the other nations of the world. See above, note 812.

864. כלה **(*kulloh*), *entirely*, spelled with a** ה **(*he*):** כלה **(*kallah*), *bride*** The normal spelling would be: כלו (*kullo*), with the pronominal suffix ו (*vav*). The ancient pronominal form ה (*he*) stimulates Rabbi Abba to read the word as כלה (*kallah*), *bride*, alluding to the divine bride, *Shekhinah*.

865. **from this issued *seed of truth—entirely seed of truth*, indeed** Alluding to Jacob, who symbolizes *Tif’eret*, called *truth*. See above, page 109.

866. כה **(*Koh*), *So, shall your seed be*** כה (*Koh*), *So*, is a name of *Shekhinah*, from whom Abraham began to engender. See above, pages 108–9.

867. **all one entity** Both *kulloh* and *koh* refer to *Shekhinah*.

868. ***tower of strength… into which runs the righteous one*, literally!** The tower is *Shekhinah* (the divine name), who is entered by *Yesod*, known as Righteous One. See *Zohar* 1:9a, 37b; 3:164a–b.

Yesod is called Righteous One, based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse, which literally

means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

869. **gate of Righteousness…** Opening of *Shekhinah*, known as Righteousness, through which one enters *Yesod*. See *Zohar* 1:54b, 93a, 98b (*ST*), 103b; 3:14a, 95a.

870. **enters both of them, attaining both of them** One who is circumcised enters both *Shekhinah* and *Yesod*. In the ritual of circumcision, first the foreskin is cut and removed, disclosing the mucous membrane, which is then torn down the center and pulled back, revealing the corona. See M *Shabbat* 19:6: "If one circumcises but does not uncover the circumcision, it is as if he has not circumcised."

In Kabbalah the two acts symbolize the sefirotic couple of *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*. Through the double procedure, one who is circumcised unites—and communes with—both of them. See *Zohar* 1:13a, 32a (*Tos*), 32a–b, 93b, 98b (*ST*); 2:3b, 40a, 125b; 3:91b, 95b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 133; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67).

871. **Whoever brings his son…** On circumcision as a sacrificial offering, see above, note 656. On the connection between circumcision and the divine name, see above, note 775.

872. **Upon this, heaven and earth are erected…** See BT *Shabbat* 137b: "Were it not for the blood of the covenant [of circumcision], heaven and earth would not endure, as is said: *Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth*." *Heaven* and *earth* symbolize *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, whose union is maintained by the covenant of circumcision, symbolizing *Yesod*, the divine phallus. See *Zohar* 1:32a, 56a, 59b, 66b, 89a, 91b, 93b.

873. **wedding celebration** הלולא (*Hillula*). Circumcision initates the male into an intimate relationship with *Shekhinah*.

See above, note 683.

874. **seeing the blessed Holy One face-to-face this day!** Through the secrets of Torah that were revealed. See above, pages 89, 98.

875. ***Everyone who is called by My name*** Through the ritual of circumcision, the divine name is inscribed in the flesh. See above, note 775.

876. **They escorted Rabbi Abba for three** miles According to Rav Sheshet (BT *Sotah* 46b), one should escort his teacher a distance of a parasang. A distinguished teacher, however, is to be escorted for three parasangs. (The Greek parasang equals about 3.5 miles.)

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 18:5; *Bereshit Rabbah* 32:10; *Zohar* 1:51a, 87a, 150b; 2:14a, 164a, 187a; 3:8b.

877. **That man** Rabbi Abba's host.

878. **My wife was the wife of my brother…** According to Deuteronomy 25:5–10, if a man's married brother dies childless, he is obligated to marry the widow. The first son born to the new couple is named after the deceased brother, *so that his name will not be blotted out of Israel* (ibid., 6). See BT *Yevamot* 24a; Rashi on Genesis 38:8.

This ritual, known as *yibbum* ("levirate marriage"), is cited in Kabbalah as proof of reincarnation: the newborn son is the reincarnation of the deceased childless brother, who is now granted another opportunity to marry and engender new life. See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 345.

879. **He** Rabbi Abba.

880. **"From now on, call him Idi"—that is, Idi son of Ya'akov** The Aramaic word אידי (*iddei*) means "this" but also conveys "that, the other, another." Here the various meanings apply, alluding to the complicated status of the child: he is "this" new creature but also "that other" one, a reincarnation of his father. The name also recalls the phrase פתח אידך (*petaḥ iddakh*), "another opened," which appears

often on the preceding pages, introducing the various anonymous expositions.

The full name, Idi son of Ya'akov, maintains the confusion of father and son, reversing the name of the Talmudic figure Ya'akov son of Idi. Perhaps the form "Idi son of Ya'akov" reflects the variant preserved in *Ein Ya'aqov, Ḥagigah* 5b: "Idi son of Rabbi Ya'akov son of Idi." See *Zohar* 2:152b–153a.

881. **When he arrived…** Back at the academy of Rabbi Shim'on. Rabbi Abba informs Rabbi Shim'on's son, Rabbi El'azar, but not the master himself because he fears his reaction to the divulgence of secrets.

882. **until he was circumcised, he fell on** his face… See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 20: "*Abram fell on his face* [*and God spoke with him*]. Until he was circumcised, whenever *Shekhinah* spoke with him, he fell down. Once he was circumcised, He spoke with him while he was standing, as is said: *Abraham remained standing in the presence of YHVH* (Genesis 18:22)."

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29; above, pages 102–3.

883. ***here is My covenant with you*, for he found himself circumcised** See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 17: "Abraham was sitting and wondering how he would be circumcised. As soon as the blessed Holy One said to him, *'I will set My covenant between Me and you'* (Genesis 17:2), what is written next? *Abraham fell on his face*. As soon as he fell on his face, the blessed Holy One gestured to that spot and a scorpion bit him, so he was circumcised. How do we know this? From what is written [next]: *and God spoke with him, saying, 'As for Me, here is My covenant with you*. Look! You are circumcised.' Further, it is written: *On this very day Abraham was circumcised* (ibid., 26). It is not said: *circumcised himself*, but rather: *was circumcised*."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 47:3: "Rabbi Levi said, 'It is not written: *Abraham circumcised himself*, but rather: *was*

circumcised. He examined himself and found himself circumcised.’”

884. **I fear they might be punished because of me** I fear that because I am telling you that the residents of Kefar Tarsha divulged secrets, they will be punished.

885. ***Do not withhold good from those who deserve it…*** See *Zohar* 2:98a; 3:297a.

886. **with this Torah they will be exiled to Babylonia…** The divulgers of Kefar Tarsha will be exiled from Galilee to Babylonia, apparently to the Torah center of Mata Meḥasya. See *Zohar* 1:101b (*MhN*); above, note 631.

Despite Rabbi Shim’on’s promise not to punish, he does. See BT *Me’ilah* 17b, where Rabbi Shim’on promises not to punish Rabbi El’azar son of Yose but does.

887. **Your heart’s configuration is apparent in your face!** Similar expressions appear in *Zohar* 3:6a, 157a; *ZḤ* 72a (*ShS*). “Configuration” renders the Zoharic neologism טופסרא (*tufsera*), based on the Aramaic טופסא (*tufsa*), “mold, form,” derived from the Greek *tupos*.

See *Zohar* 1:20b, 30b, 157a, 241b, 242b, 243b; 2:235b (*Tos*); 3:120a, 270b; *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178–80.

888. **they will learn those ways…** The ways of the Babylonians, who conceal secrets rather than divulging them. See *Zohar* 1:224b–225a; Liebes, “Ziqqat ha-Zohar le-Erets Yisra’el,” 35–36.

889. **For words are revealed only among us…** Only Rabbi Shim’on and his circle have been authorized by God to reveal mysteries. See *Zohar* 2:190b–191a; 3:79a; *TZ, Haqdamah*, 1a; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 29; Meroz, “Va-Ani lo Hayiti Sham?”

1. ***time of singing…*** עת הזמיר (*Et hazamir*). *Zamir* means both “singing” and “pruning” (as in Leviticus 25:3). Rabbi Ḥiyya plays with both senses.

2. **Everything existed in earth, but she yielded no fruit until Adam arrived…** See BT *Ḥullin* 60b: “Rabbi Assi pointed out a contradiction: It is written: *The earth brought forth vegetation* (Genesis 1:12), on the third day, but it is written: *No bush of the field was yet on earth* [*and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for YHVH Elohim had not rained upon earth and there was no human to till the soil*] (ibid. 2:5), on the eve of Sabbath. This teaches that plants began to grow but stopped as they verged on breaking through the soil, until Adam came and prayed for them; then rain fell and they sprouted. This teaches you that the blessed Holy One yearns for the prayers of the righteous.” See *Zohar* 1:46b.

3. **ritual of singing praises before the blessed Holy One…** According to an early mystical tradition, preserved in *Pereq Shirah*, each creature sings a particular biblical verse to God.

4. ***The voice of the turtledove…* the word of the blessed Holy One…** See *Zohar* 1:215b; 3:4b.

5. ***When you till the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you…*** This curse is delivered to Cain after he murders Abel.

6. **Noah arrived—and invented spades and multitoothed files** See *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 11: “Before Noah was born, people did not reap what they sowed. If they sowed wheat, they reaped thorns and thistles. Once Noah was born, the world became arable once again. They reaped what they sowed, sowing wheat and reaping wheat, sowing barley and reaping barley. Furthermore, until Noah was born, they worked by hand…. Once Noah was born, he invented plows, scythes, spades, and all kinds of tools.” See *Zohar* 1:38a, 58b.

“Multitoothed files” renders פצירי (*petsirei*), from the rare word פצירה (*petsirah*) in 1 Samuel 13:21, understood as “file” by *Targum Yonatan*, and “multitoothed file” by Rashi and Radak.

7. **Later, *he drank of the wine and became drunk*** The verse continues: *and exposed himself inside his tent*. Adam’s sin had ruined the union between *Shekhinah* and *Tif’eret* (see *Zohar* 1:53b). Noah tried to repair the damage and reunite *Shekhinah* with Her partner. However, intoxicated by the wine of false imagining, he blundered and exposed “the breach of the world” (*Zohar* 1:73a–b).

The final letter of אהלה (*oholoh*), *his tent*, is a ה (*he*), rather than the normal masculine possessive suffix ו (*vav*). The suffix ה (*he*) usually denotes the feminine possessive, *her*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 36:4: “Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Simon and Rabbi Ḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shemu’el son of Rav Yitsḥak, ‘…It is spelled אהלה (*oholah*), *her tent:* inside the tent of his wife.’” In other words, Noah shamed himself in his wife’s tent. See Theodor’s note, ad loc.

The *Zohar* often reads the word as *oholah, her tent*, taking it to mean: “the tent of *Shekhinah*,” site of Noah’s sin. See *Zohar* 1:73a–b, 83a.

8. **inhabitants of the world came and sinned…** Building the Tower of Babel.

9. **As soon as Abraham arrived… *the blossoms appeared on the earth…*** The patriarchs are identified as *the blossoms* in *Zohar* 1:1b, 39b, 215b. They symbolize the triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*.

10. ***time of pruning…* to circumcise himself** Pruning his foreskin. On the connection between foreskin and fruit trees, see Leviticus 19:23; *Tosefta, Shabbat* 15:9; *Bereshit Rabbah* 46:4.

11. ***YHVH appeared to him*** The verse continues: *by the terebinths of Mamre, as he was sitting at the opening of the tent in the heat of the day.*

On the link between the covenant of circumcision and divine vision, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:2; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8; *Zohar* 1:88b–89a, 91a–b, 98a–b; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48; idem, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 342, 357–59, 396–97; idem, "Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah," 186–88.

12. **Until he was circumcised, He spoke with him only on a low rung…** Only on the rung of *Shekhinah*, without the participation of the higher *sefirot*. See above, pages 64–66, 73–74.

Cf. *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 20: "*Abram fell on his face* [*and God spoke with him*]. Until he was circumcised, whenever *Shekhinah* spoke with him, he fell down. Once he was circumcised, He spoke with him while he was standing, as is said: *Abraham remained standing in the presence of YHVH* (Genesis 18:22)." See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29; above, pages 102–3.

13. ***blossoms appeared on the earth*—low rungs…** Powers beneath *Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by *the earth*. Once She was joined by higher *sefirot, Shekhinah* blossomed fully.

14. ***time of pruning has arrived*—branches of foreskin** The foreskin symbolizes demonic powers that must be pruned. See *Zohar* 1:13a, 18a, 35b, 91b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (68).

15. **voice issuing from within the innermost** The voice of *Tif'eret* issuing from within *Binah*, the inaudible voice. See *Zohar* 1:50b, 141b; 2:226b.

16. **voice sculpting a spoken word, rendering her perfect** The voice of *Tif'eret* becomes articulate as it proceeds through the mouth of *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the spoken word. Thereby revelation is completed and the word of *Shekhinah* consummated.

The phrase גזר מלה (*gezar millah*) means "cutting (or articulating) a word," but also suggests "cutting *milah*, circumcision." A similar play on words appears in *Sefer*

Yetsirah 1:3: "Ten *sefirot belimah*, of nothingness [or: of restraint], corresponding to the ten fingers, five opposite five—with the single covenant precisely in the middle: in מילת (*millat*), the word, of the tongue; and in מילת (*milat*), circumcision, of genitals."

17. **this rung alone stood over him...** *Shekhinah*. See above, note 12.

18. **how is this more laudable than before he was circumcised...** Then, too, *YHVH appeared to Abram*.

19. ***YHVH appeared to him*—to that rung who spoke with him** *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the name *YHVH*, manifested to *Shekhinah*.

20. **Now voice was revealed, joining speech in addressing him** Now the voice of *Tif'eret* amplified the speech of *Shekhinah*.

21. ***He was sitting at the opening of the tent*** The full verse reads: *YHVH appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre, as he was sitting at the opening of the tent in the heat of the day*.

22. ***He*—not revealing whom... all those rungs...** Grammatically, the third-person pronoun is referred to as נסתר (*nistar*), "hidden," as opposed to the second-person pronoun, which is called נוכח (*nokheaḥ*), "present." In the *Zohar* this grammatical designation is given a mystical twist: *He* alludes to the higher, "hidden" realm of the *sefirot*—flowing into *Shekhinah, the opening of the tent*, the opening of the divine realm.

23. **supernal world poised to illumine it** *Binah*, who conveys the flow of emanation to *Shekhinah*.

24. ***In the heat of the day*, for right was radiant...** The *heat* alludes to the brilliant light of *Ḥesed*, located on the right, attained by Abraham.

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*); 2:36a; 3:14a.

25. **when rung drew near rung, desiring one another** The *heat* can also signify the mutual passion of the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

26. **Before he was circumcised, he was obstructed…** Still covered by the foreskin, which blocked revelation. See above, pages 90–91, 102; *Zohar* 2:36a.

27. ***He*—supernal world…** The third-person, "hidden" pronoun alludes to the higher, hidden realm of the *sefirot*, resting upon *Shekhinah, the opening of the tent*. See above, note 22.

28. **righteous one abiding there** *Yesod*, known as Righteous One, abiding in *Shekhinah*. He is given this name based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse, which literally means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

29. **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who stand over this rung…** The sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the three patriarchs. Their rich flow of emanation nourishes *Shekhinah*.

30. **preparing a throne for them** *Shekhinah* serves as a throne for the patriarchs.

31. **made King David one leg of the supernal throne, just like the patriarchs** According to Resh Lakish (*Bereshit Rabbah* 47:6), "The patriarchs themselves constitute the Chariot," which serves as the divine throne. In the *Zohar* this is taken to mean that their sefirotic triad serves as a throne for the higher *sefirot*. This throne becomes more stable through the support of *Shekhinah*, known as *Malkhut* ("Kingship") and symbolized by King David.

On David and the patriarchs, see BT *Pesaḥim* 117b; *Mo'ed Qatan* 16b; *Sanhedrin* 107a; *Midrash Tehillim* 18:25; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 57; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittaḥon*, 396; *Zohar* 1:5b, 20a,

60b, 82a, 89b (*ST*), 154b, 156a, 197b, 237a, 248b; 2:144a; 3:262b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 45 (54); Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 32:10; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:265, n. 94.

32. **Therefore King David assumed kingship in Hebron for seven years…** See 2 Samuel 2:11. The seven years symbolize the seven *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Shekhinah*. David reigned in Hebron so he could join the three patriarchs, who were buried there in the Cave of Machpelah. Rabbi Abba plays here on חברון (*Ḥevron*), "Hebron," and לאתחברא (*le-itḥabbara*), "to join." See *Zohar* 1:79b, 125a, 246b; 2:31a.

33. **fail to see the foundation of their existence…** Literally, "fail to see upon what they stand [or: exist]." See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Rabbi Yose says, 'Woe to creatures, who see yet know not what they see, who stand yet know not upon what they stand! Upon what does the earth stand? Upon the pillars, as is said: *Who shakes the earth from her place, and her pillars tremble* (Iob 9:6). The pillars [stand] upon the waters.… The waters, upon the mountains.… The mountains, on the wind.… The wind, on the storm.… The storm is suspended from the arm of the blessed Holy One.'"

34. **they have all been created, and they all endure above…** The days of a human life are living entities, preceding one's earthly existence and enduring afterward. See *Zohar* 1:224a–b; above, pp. 25–26, n. 182.

35. **When days approach departing this world, they all draw near…** See *Zohar* **1:221b–222a, 224a–b.**

36. **as one draws down upon himself…** See BT *Yoma* 39a: "Our Rabbis taught: *'Do not defile yourselves with them and thus become defiled* (Leviticus 11:43). If one defiles himself slightly, he is defiled greatly; below, he is defiled from above; in this world, he is defiled in the world to come.' Our Rabbis taught: *'Hallow yourselves and you will be holy* (ibid., 44). If one sanctifies himself slightly, he is sanctified greatly; below, he is sanctified from above; in this

world, he is sanctified in the world to come.'" See *Zohar* 1:129b–130a.

37. **children of the East…** Famous for their knowledge of astrology and magic. See *Qohelet Rabbah* on 7:23; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 4:3; *Tanḥuma, Ḥuqqat* 6; Judah ben Barzillai, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 159; Naḥmanides, introduction to Commentary on the Torah, and on Deuteronomy 18:10; *Zohar* 1:133b, 223a–b. All these sources cite 1 Kings 5:10: *Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the children of the East*.

38. **As one's aspiration is directed in this world…** See BT *Shabbat* 104a: "Resh Lakish said, '… If one comes to defile himself, he is provided an opening; if one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.'"

Cf. *Makkot* 10b: "Rabbah son of Bar Ḥana said in the name of Rabbi Huna (some say, Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi El'azar), 'From the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings it can be demonstrated that one is led on the path one wishes to take.'"

See *Zohar* 1:54a, 56b, 62a, 125b, 169b, 198b; 2:50a; 3:47a.

39. **other side** סטרא אחרא (*Sitra aḥra*), the demonic realm.

40. **essence… depends on words, action, and the aspiration to cleave…** See *Zohar* 1:161a; 2:239b; 3:184a, 285a.

41. **I found in it** In that book.

42. **requisites** Such as magical formulas and incense.

43. **drawing them down** Drawing down astral powers. See *Zohar* 2:112a.

44. **transformed into an ordained attendant…** Souls of the righteous turn into angels. See *Zohar* 1:129b; *ZḤ* 19a (*MhN*), 20d–21a (*MhN*); *TZ, Haqdamah*, 16b.

45. **'wounds wreaked upon humans'** The phrase derives from a legal term meaning "injuries inflicted upon humans" (*Tosefta, Bava Qamma* 1:1; BT *Bava Qamma* 84a). Here the word נזקי (*nizqei*), "injuries," alludes to מזיקין

(*mazziqin*), “demons.” Whereas one who cleaves to holiness is transformed into an angel, one who clings to defilement turns demonic.

See *Zohar* 1:29a (*TZ*), 129b; 2:118a (*RM*); 3:16b (*RM*), 25a, 70a; *ZḤ* 11a (*MhN*); *ZḤ* 118c (*TZ*); *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Margaliot, par. 1170.

46. **becoming a wounder like one of those universal wounders** Literally, “becoming an injury… injuries,” i.e., turning into a demon. See the previous note.

47. **children of the East were wise *…the sons of his concubines…*** See BT *Sanhedrin* 91a: “*To the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts*…. What is the meaning of *gifts*? Rabbi Yirmeyah son of Abba said, ‘This teaches that he transmitted to them a name of defilement [by which to conjure demons and sorcery].’”

See above, note 37; *Zohar* 1:133b, 223a; Judah ben Barzillai, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 159.

48. ***all that he had…* holy heritage of faith to which Abraham cleaved** The sefirotic realm. See *Zohar* 1:133b, 223a.

49. ***Behold, YHVH was standing over him*** Over Jacob, demonstrating that he had attained supreme holiness.

50. ***You, Jacob, My servant…*** Isaiah 41:8 reads: *You, Israel, My servant; Jacob, whom I have chosen*. See ibid. 44:1: *Now listen, Jacob, My servant; Israel, whom I have chosen!*

51. **figure** טופסא (*Tufsa*), “mold, form,” derived from the Greek *tupos*, referring here apparently to an idolatrous image.

See *Targum Neophyti*, Exodus 32:4; *Zohar* 1:20b, 30b, 96b, 157a, 241b, 242b, 243b; 2:235b (*Tos*); 3:120a, 270b; *Bei’ur ha-Mtllim ha-Zarot*, 179–80.

52. **one who has not been defiled by them nor defiled the body…** Alluding to masturbation, considered a heinous sin. See BT *Niddah* 13a; *Zohar* 1:56b–57a, 188a,

219b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 353; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1365–66.

The connection between idolatrous worship and sexual sin is prevalent. See Numbers 25; *Zohar* 1:131b; 2:3b, 61a, 87b, 90a, 243a; 3:84a; *ZḤ* 21a (*MhN*), 78c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 212.

53. **נפשי (*nafshi*), *My soul*... written: נפשו (*nafsho*), *his soul*** The word is spelled נפשו (*nafsho*), *his soul*, but traditionally read as: נפשי (*nafshi*), *My soul*, referring to God's soul. Here both alternatives are interpreted. See *Zohar* 3:45b; Radak and *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.; *Bereshit Rabbah* 59:5.

54. ***My soul*—soul of David, side of faith** The divine soul is *Shekhinah*, who is also known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"), linked with King David. One who is righteous does not expose Her to demonic forces (*vanity*). See *Zohar* 1:206a; 2:27a, 171a; 3:45b.

55. **soul of a human being** His own soul, which through sin can also be exposed to *vanity*.

56. **his soul will ascend by worthy deeds** With the help of the good deeds he has enacted on earth.

57. **all those holy beings** Angels.

58. **the blessed Holy One sent him three angels visibly to greet him** Since God too visits the sick. See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 86b; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 1–2.

59. **Look at what is written: *He makes His angels spirits*!** The verse means literally: *He makes winds his messengers*, but Rabbi Abba reads the words in their precise order to teach that angels are invisible.

A similar interpretation appears in *Tanḥuma, Ḥayyei Sarah* 3; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:4; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 77; *Zohar* 1:40b (*Heikh*), 81a (*ST*), 144a; 2:229b; 3:126b, 152a.

60. **in descending to earth they clothe themselves...** Spiritual entities manifest on earth in

physical form.

See Naḥmanides on Genesis 18:1; *Zohar* 1:34a, 58a, 81a (*ST*), 98b (*ST*), 144a; 2:197a, 229b, 231a; 3:126b, 152a, 208a; *ZḤ* 81a (*MhN, Rut*).

61. **so as not to attenuate his pattern of behavior** Abraham was known for his generous hospitality, on account of which he attained the quality of *Ḥesed*.

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 12; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*); 2:36a; 3:14a.

62. **He certainly saw them in angelic appearance** Not simply in human form.

63. ***He said, 'אדני (Adonai), My Lord'*** Or, *My lords*. Commentators differ on whether Abraham is addressing the angels or God.

See BT *Shevu'ot* 35b; Rashi, Naḥmanides, and *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 6:9.

64. **spelled אלף דלת נון יוד (*alef, dalet, nun, yod*)—*Shekhinah*...** This divine name designates *Shekhinah*, who was accompanied by three angels beneath, colored white, red, and green. See *Zohar* 1:91a, 97b, 97b–102a (*ST*).

65. **being circumcised, he saw...** See *Zohar* 1:88b–89a, 91a–b, 97b–98b.

66. **gladdened him with the joyous news of Isaac** Predicting the birth of Isaac. See Genesis 18:10.

67. **אֵלָיו (*Elav*), *To him*** The verse reads: *They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" He said, "Here in the tent."*

68. **אי״ו (*alef, yod, vav*), a symbol...** Certain letters in the Torah are dotted, inviting midrashic interpretation. The three dotted letters in this word spell איו (*Ayyo*), "Where is he?" See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:15: "Rabbi Azariah said, 'Just as they asked Abraham "Where is Sarah?" so they asked Sarah "איו (*Ayyo*), Where is he?"—[namely,] Abraham.'" Here, Rabbi Shim'on understands the latter question as

pertaining to the divine male, *Tif'eret*, the blessed Holy One. Alternatively, the three letters אי״ו (*alef, yod, vav*) allude to *Keter, Ḥokhmah*, and *Ti'feret*.

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 69; BT *Bava Metsi'a* 87a; *Soferim* 6:3; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 34; B, 37.

69. **there is written: *an immovable tent*...** Alluding to *Shekhinah*, firmly attached to the divine ground. See *Zohar* 1:52b, 239a; 2:65b, 194a.

70. **why is it followed by: איה (*ayyeh*), *where?*** Since איו (*ayyo*) poses the question "Where is he," why the further question?

71. **Because of union of male and female as one, mystery of faith** The final letter of איה (*ayyeh*), *where*, is ה (*he*), often a feminine marker, so the two questions allude to the divine couple, *Ti'feret* and *Shekhinah*, whose union constitutes the mystery of faith.

72. ***'Here in the tent'*—there, all-encompassing nexus...** By uniting with *Shekhinah, Tif'eret* conveys to Her the entire flow of emanation, which now manifests *in the tent*.

73. ***I will pass through the land of Egypt, I, YHVH*** The verse reads: *I will pass through the land of Egypt on this night and strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human and beast, and upon all the gods of Egypt I will render judgment, I, YHVH*.

74. **However, none of them knows how to distinguish...** See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 61b: "Rava said, '... The blessed Holy One said, "It is I who distinguished in Egypt between the [seminal] drop of a firstborn and of a later born."'" Cf. *Zohar* 3:149a.

75. ***Make a mark upon the foreheads of the people*** The verse reads: *Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and make a mark upon the foreheads of the people who moan and groan over all the abominations committed in it*. Only those bearing the mark escape death (ibid., 6).

76. **when the Destroyer appears... a person should take cover...** See BT *Bava Qamma* 60a–b: "Rabbi Yosef

taught: ‘What is the meaning of the verse *None of you shall go out the door of his house until morning?* Once permission has been granted to the Destroyer, he does not distinguish between righteous and wicked.’… Our Rabbis taught: ‘A plague in town? Keep your feet indoors.’ … Our Rabbis taught: ‘A plague in town? One should not walk in the middle of the road, because the Angel of Death walks there—for as soon as permission has been granted him, he strides brazenly.’”

See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 11; *Zohar* 1:63a, 68a–b, 69a, 107b, 113a, 182b, 197b, 204b; 2:36a (*MhN*), 196a, 227a; 3:54a–b.

77. **From them, yes** From the presence of the angels, one can hide.

78. **so that it would not seem that he had invited them to eat…** So Abraham would not feel that he had to feed them in gratitude for the prediction of Isaac’s birth. Rather, the invitation to eat was an act of kindness.

79. ***They ate*. Would you ever imagine that supernal angels eat?…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:14; BT *Bava Metsi’a* 86b; *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Da’at Zeqenim* (*Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*) on Genesis 18:8; *Zohar* 1:101b (*ST*), 104a, 144a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:236, n. 143.

80. **fire consuming fire** See BT *Yoma* 21b: “Our Rabbis taught: There are six kinds of fire:… fire repelling fire: that of Gabriel; fire consuming fire: that of *Shekhinah*.” The angelic fire that repels fire alludes to the conquest of fire in Daniel 3:27, as explained in *Pesaḥim* 118a–b. The fire consuming fire alludes to the divine fire that can burn angels, as described in *Sanhedrin* 38b. Here Rabbi El’azar identifies the angels with “fire consuming fire.”

81. **they eat from that side above** Angels are nourished from *Ḥesed*, the *sefirah* of Abraham, on the right side. According to Rabbi Yitsḥak (*Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*, 6:1; *Tanḥuma, Pinḥas* 12), angels “are nourished from the splendor of *Shekhinah*.”

82. **Whatever Abraham ate was eaten in purity** See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 87a: "Ephraim Maksha'ah, a disciple of Rabbi Me'ir, said in his name, 'Abraham our father used to eat ordinary food only in a state of purity.'"

83. **have him undergo immersion—or have him wait seven days…** Certain forms of impurity simply require immersion in water, while more severe forms require waiting seven days before immersion. See, e.g., Leviticus 15:13.

84. ***If a man becomes impure due to nocturnal mishap*** The verse reads: *If any man among you becomes impure due to nocturnal mishap, he must go outside the camp; he must not enter the midst of the camp*. The *mishap* is an involuntary seminal emission, which—according to the *Zohar*—impregnates Na'amah, mother of demons, producing a new generation of demons.

See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 26; *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:11; BT *Eruvin* 18b; *Zohar* 1:9b, 34b, 54b–55a; 2:231b; 3:76b.

85. ***Toward evening he shall bathe in water*** The verse continues: *and when the sun sets, he may come inside the camp*.

86. **flow, leprosy, or menstrual defilement** Genital discharge, skin disease, or contact with a menstruous woman.

87. **that immersion is insufficient…** He has to wait seven days and then immerse himself again. See M *Berakhot* 3:6; BT *Berakhot* 21b, 26a; JT *Shevu'ot* 2:1, 33d; *Zohorei Ya'bets*.

88. ***the One*** That is, God.

89. ***Pure*—Abraham who issued from Terah** See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:1: "*Who can bring forth pure from impure? Is it not the One?* For example, Abraham from Terah, Hezekiah from Ahaz, Josiah from Amon, Mordecai from Shim'i, Israel from the idolaters, the world to come from this world. Who did this? Who commanded this? Who

decreed this? Was it not the Unique One of the world?" See *Zohar* 3:48b, 180b.

90. **rung of Abraham. Who is that? Water** *Ḥesed*, the flowing love of God, symbolized by Abraham.

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 12; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1: 77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*); 2:36a; 3:14a.

91. **warned him** Urging him to reject idolatry.

92. **If not** If the impurity was more severe.

93. **for seven** For seven days.

94. **in order to see and test them** Before he realized they were angels.

95. **the blessed Holy One, who is the Tree of Life for all** *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the Tree of Life.

96. **When Adam sinned…** The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil symbolizes *Shekhinah*. Adam's sin was that he worshiped and partook of *Shekninah* alone, splitting Her off from the other *sefirot* and divorcing Her from Her husband, *Tif'eret*, the Tree of Life.

See *Zohar* 1:12b, 35b–36a, 53b, 221a–b; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 231–32, 236, 404–5, n. 105; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:373–76.

97. **he mended the world with another tree, the Tree of Life** Mending the damage inflicted by Adam. See *Ba'al ha-Turim* on Genesis 9:20.

98. ***I will surely return to you when life is due*** The verse continues: *and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son!*

99. **The verse should read: *He will surely return*** Referring to God, not to the angel speaking with Abraham.

100. **'Three keys have not been handed over to any messenger…'** See BT *Ta'anit* 2a: "Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'Three keys lie in the hands of the blessed Holy One and have not been handed over to any messenger; namely, the key of rain, the key of childbirth, and the key of resurrection.'"

101. ***He said*, anonymously, or *He called*, anonymously** Without naming the divine subject. See *Zohar* 1:115a, 138a, 142b, 173b; 2:60b, 125b, 131a.

102. **Angel of Covenant** *Shekhinah*, who joins with *Yesod*, the divine phallus, known as Covenant. See *Zohar* 1:131b, 135b.

103. **entirely the blessed Holy One** Entirely divine.

104. **that he would issue from Hagar, as previously** That the son-to-be would issue from Hagar, as had Ishmael.

105. **When he bound him on the altar** When Abraham bound Isaac.

106. **Isaac was thirty-seven years old… if he had kicked**… See *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 2: "Isaac… said to his father, 'Father, bind me well and place me on the altar, lest I kick you and smite you, and find myself doubly guilty of murder. I am a young man, in full strength, thirty-seven years old!'"

On Isaac's age at the time of his ordeal, see *Seder Olam Rabbah* 1; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 24; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 23; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 31; Theodor's note on *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:4, 587–88.

107. **he honored his father, allowing himself to be bound**… See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 31: "Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'Father, bind me! Bind both my hands and both my feet… [lest] I violate *Honor your father* (Exodus 20:12).'" See David Luria, ad loc., n. 36; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Deuteronomy, 830.

108. ***And a servant his master*—Eliezer to Abraham** See *Zohar* 1:146b.

109. **quite handsome** According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 59:8, Eli'ezer resembled Abraham. According to *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 16, Eli'ezer was a prince, son of King Nimrod (according to another version, Nimrod's servant), presented by the king to Abraham after the latter emerged unscathed from the fiery furnace. According to *Soferim*,

add. 1:2, Eli'ezer was none other than the giant Og, on whose beauty see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:5:3.

110. ***If I am a father, where is My honor?*** The verse continues: *If I am a master, where is My reverence?*

111. ***Behold, a son!*** The verse may be rendered: *Behold, a son for your wife Sarah!* or, as previously: *Behold, your wife Sarah will have a son!*

112. **Sarah's son, because of whom she died…** According to midrashic tradition, Sarah died in anguish over Isaac's ordeal on the altar.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 26:3; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 23; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 32; *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:5; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 23:2.

113. **ascending because of him, when the blessed Holy One sits…** According to rabbinic tradition, Sarah conceived on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment. Her memory is invoked and her miracle commemorated by the Scriptural reading for the first day of the festival, which begins: *YHVH attended to Sarah as He had said*. The reading for the second day recounts the binding of Isaac, recalling his merit as God sits in judgment over the world. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 73:1; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 17; BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 10b–11a.

114. **female absorbs the son from male** According to medieval science, the female receives the seed from the male.

115. ***and he was behind it*** The phrase is usually rendered, *which was behind him*, referring to the opening of the tent behind the messenger, but Rabbi Shim'on understands it differently.

116. **The verse should read:… *and she was behind him*** Referring to Sarah, who was behind the messenger (or behind Abraham). The word אחריו (*aḥarav*) can mean "behind it" or "behind him."

117. ***Sarah heard*** **what was spoken by *the opening of the tent…*** The verse reads: ושרה שומעת פתח האהל (*Ve-Sarah*

shoma'at petaḥ haohel), usually rendered: *Sarah was listening at the opening of the tent*. The Hebrew, however, employs no preposition before *the opening*. Taking advantage of this ellipsis, Rabbi Shim'on reads the words hyperliterally: *Sarah heard the opening of the tent*. She heard *Shekhinah*, the opening of the divine realm. See above, pages 119–20. Here "the blessed Holy One" refers to *Shekhinah*.

118. ***ve-hu, and He*, spoke *aḥarav, after it*** The divine male, *Tif'eret*, spoke after *the opening of the tent, Shekhinah*.

119. **Alternatively, Sarah was sitting *at the opening of the tent* to listen in** Understanding *the opening of the tent* according to its plain meaning.

120. **The span of days befitting them…** Their days on earth correspond to the cosmic days: the *sefirot*. Abraham's one hundred years correspond to the full sefirotic decade, while Sarah's ninety years correspond to nine *sefirot*.

121. **They had entered days** Rabbi Shim'on reads the phrase באים בימים (*ba'im ba-yamim*), *advanced in days*, hyperliterally: *coming into days*, entering the sefirotic days. See *Zohar* 1:126a (*MhN*), 129b, 142a, 224a; 3:170b.

122. ***Advanced in days*, as in the expression 'The day has advanced'…** This stage of their lives was drawing to a close. Now, with the announcement of Isaac's birth, a new phase beckoned.

123. **delight, menstruating…** עדונא (*ldduna*), implying both "delight" and "menstrual period." Though past menopause, Sarah miraculously rejuvenated.

See Genesis 18:12: *Sarah laughed within, saying: "After I have withered, am I to have* עדנה (*ednah*), *delight—with my husband so old?"* Rabbinic midrash transforms Sarah's rhetorical question into a declarative statement. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:17: *"After I have withered, I have had ednah!*… A woman, as long as she is young, has menstrual periods, while as for me, *after I have withered, I have had ednah*, menstrual periods, but *my husband is old!*"

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 36: "That moment, as Sarah was kneading [dough to prepare cakes for the messengers], she saw *the way of women* [i.e., she discovered herself menstruating]."

See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 87a: "*After I have withered, I have had ednah!* Rav Ḥisda said, 'After the flesh had withered and wrinkles multiplied, the flesh נתעדן (*nitadden*), "rejuvenated, became tender," the wrinkles were smoothed out, and beauty returned to its site.'"

124. ***Your glory is above the heavens*** The verse reads: *His glory is above the heavens*.

125. **Finally all… declare: *Blessed be the glory of YHVH from His place!*** Wherever He is. See BT *Ḥagigah* 13b: "Behold it is written: *Blessed be the glory of YHVH from His place!*—implying that no one knows His place."

Cf. *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 4; *Zohar* 3:159a; and *Bahir* 90 (131): "*Blessed be the glory of YHVH from its place!* What is *the glory of YHVH?* A parable. To what can this be compared? To a king who had a matron in his chamber, with whom all his soldiers delighted. She had children who came each day to see the king and praise him. They asked him, 'Where is our mother?' He replied, 'You cannot see her now.' They said, 'May she be blessed wherever she is!'"

126. **But indeed, *Her husband is known in the gates*—the blessed Holy One** The biblical description of the "woman of valor" (Proverbs 31:10–31) is understood in Kabbalah as a hymn to *Shekhinah*. Her husband is the blessed Holy One. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 11:8.

127. **opens the gates of imagination** Aramaic, משער (*mesha'er*), "estimates, imagines," playing on the Hebrew שער (*sha'ar*), "gate." Imagination enables the human mind to fathom God—though, as Rabbi Yehudah goes on to say, all imaginative representations fall short of true divine being. See the thirteenth-century German Hasidic *Shir ha-Kavod:* "They have portrayed You in many visions; You remain one through all imaginings."

On the relation between visions of the divine and human imagination, see Hai Gaon (cited in *Arukh*, s.v., *avnei shayish tahor*), describing the ascent of the Merkavah mystics: "Not that they actually ascend on high, but rather they see and gaze within the recesses of their minds." Ḥananel son of Ḥushiel (on BT *Berakhot* 6a, cited by Judah ben Barzillai, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 32) writes: "The blessed Holy One reveals His glory to those who revere and love Him through אובנתא דלבא (*uvneta de-libba*), apprehension [or: projections] of the mind."

See BT *Megillah* 24b; *Otsar ha-Ge'onim* 1, appendix, 3; *NZ*, ad loc., n. 1; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 144–48.

128. ***Lift up your heads, O gates! Be lifted up, openings of eternity!*** The verse continues: *So the King of Glory may come*.

129. **Through these gates, supernal rungs…** Through the *sefirot*, the Unknown becomes known. See *Zohar* 1:160b; 3:253, 253b (*RM*).

130. **smooth members** שייפין (*Shaifin*), from a root meaning "to smooth, rub, slip." In the *Zohar*, the word signifies "limbs," perhaps based on the Talmudic expression (BT *Sotah* 7b) על איבריה לשפא (*al eivreih le-shafa*), "each limb entered its socket"—"slipping" into place—or "…the chest."

See *Arukh*, s.v. *shaf*; Rashi, ad loc., and on Job 33:21, citing *Ḥullin* 42b; *Zohar* 3:170a.

131. **soul of soul** The human soul originates in God, who is the essence of this essence. The phrase "soul of soul" derives from Solomon ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut* 4:47: "You are alive but not through… soul, for You are soul of soul."

See *Zohar* 1:245a; 3:109b (*RM*), 152a; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 110, 375, n. 97. On the parallel between the soul and God, see BT *Berakhot* 10a; *Midrash Tehillim* 103:5; *Zohar* 1:140a.

132. **openings for soul** The *sefirot* are openings for the human soul to approach the hidden God, and openings for "soul of soul" to manifest.

133. **There is opening within opening, rung upon rung…** The *sefirot* are revealed one by one, as the seeker journeys within and beyond.

134. ***Opening of the tent*—opening of Righteousness…** *Shekhinah* is the opening of the divine realm and is known as Righteousness. See above, pages 119–20, 131–32.

135. **all other supernal openings come into view** The other *sefirot* are reflected in *Shekhinah*.

136. **Now—when this opening is unknown, since Israel is in exile…** Israel's exile symbolizes cosmic dysfunction, the rupturing of sefirotic unity. The higher openings have closed shut and vanished, leaving *Shekhinah* Herself in exile: abandoned by the higher *sefirot* and unknown on earth.

137. **they cannot know…** Israel cannot know.

138. ***spirit of wisdom and understanding…*** The various spirits in the verse represent higher *sefirot*.

139. **All those are destined to alight upon King Messiah below** See *Zohar* 3:130b (*IR*).

140. ***with righteousness*** With *Shekhinah*, who includes all the *sefirot*.

141. **Abraham was gladdened** With the news that a son would be born to Sarah.

142. ***He said*—who it was is not recorded. It was *opening of the tent*** The anonymous subject is none other than *Shekhinah*. See above, pages 129–30.

143. ***Sarah heard the opening of the tent*** She heard *Shekhinah*. See above, note 117.

144. ***whose seed is in it, according to its kind*** Isaac issued from Abraham as holy seed.

145. **that seed of his was unholy** Ishmael.

146. **foreskin below** The demonic realm. See *Zohar* 1:13a, 18a, 35b, 91b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (68).

147. **engendering above** Engendering Isaac, who symbolizes *Gevurah*. Alternatively, the phrase may refer to Isaac's engendering of Jacob, who symbolizes *Tif'eret*. See *Zohar* 1:96a.

148. **Abraham cleaved to his rung fittingly** Now Abraham attained fully the *sefirah* of *Ḥesed*. See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*), 98a; 2:36a; 3:14a.

149. **Water actually conceived and bore darkness** The flowing love of *Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham and water, engendered the rigor of *Gevurah*, symbolized by Isaac and darkness. See *Shemot Rabbah* 15:22: "Water conceived and bore darkness." Cf. *Zohar* 1:32b, 142a, 168b.

150. **Why did the blessed Holy One call him יצחק (*Yitsḥaq*), Isaac…?** The name יצחק (*Yitsḥaq*) means "He laughs." See Genesis 18:12–15; 21:6.

151. **Apparently He called him Isaac before he issued into the world** Whereas normally the mother or father names the child at birth.

152. **fire appropriates water, for water flows on the side of *Gevurah*** *Gevurah* (on the left, symbolized by fire and by Isaac) encompasses *Ḥesed* (on the right, symbolized by water and by Abraham) and conveys it below. See *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:12.

153. **Come and ask the Levites, who gladden that side…** The Levites, deriving from *Gevurah*, sweeten the harshness of the left side. See *Zohar* 1:142b, 148b; 3:48b, 121b (*RM*).

154. **So Isaac is joy, issuing from that side and cleaving there** Isaac, whose name derives from "laughter," is linked with *Gevurah*, who is gladdened.

155. ***Yitsḥaq*, Isaac—jesting, joy, transforming…** Isaac symbolizes the transformation of *Ḥesed* into *Gevurah* and their dialectical interaction, which engenders joy. The interplay of these two *sefirot* is essential: too much *Ḥesed* would generate indulgence; too much *Gevurah* (also called *Din*, severe "Judgment") would doom the world. See *Zohar* 1:118b, 119b, 133b.

156. **Therefore he was named so…** Isaac's name is not merely personal; it symbolizes a vital cosmic principle.

157. **announcing it to Abraham** By telling him: *You will name him Isaac* (Genesis 17:19).

158. **In all other cases, the blessed Holy One let them name their children…** Other parents were allowed to select a name for their children.

159. **you and no one else, transforming…** Abraham, symbolizing *Ḥesed*, had to name his son Isaac, symbolizing *Gevurah*, in order to harmonize both *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 1:118a–b.

160. ***The men arose from there and gazed toward Sodom*** The verse continues: —*Abraham walking with them to send them off*. Now that *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah* had been harmonized, the angels could proceed to Sodom. The city would be destroyed through the harsh rigor of *Gevurah*, while Lot would be saved through the quality of *Ḥesed*.

161. **He sends him a gift What is that? A poor person…** So he can demonstrate virtue by helping him. See *Sefer ha-Yashar* (attributed to Rabbeinu Tam), chap. 13: "As the sage said, 'When the Creator wishes to send a gift to his devotees, he arranges for a poor person to appear at his gate.'" Cf. *Zohar* 2:198a.

162. **thread emanating from the right side** From *Ḥesed*. Cf. the rabbinic phrase "a thread of *Ḥesed*" (BT *Megillah* 13a, *Ḥagigah* 12b). See *Zohar* 3:76a.

163. **he withdraws from him** The Destroyer withdraws from God's beloved.

164. ***God remembered Abraham…*** **What did He remember?…** Abraham's hospitality toward the three angels gained him merit, on account of which God saved his nephew Lot.

See *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 23:5: "I sent Lot, their [the Moabites'] ancestor *out of the midst of the upheaval* only on account of Abraham's merit, as is said: *So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out* [*of the midst of the upheaval*]."

Cf. *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:38; *Tanḥuma, Balaq* 12; *Bereshit Rabbah* 40(41):3 (on Genesis 13:5).

165. ***Charity delivers from death*** See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b; *Bava Batra* 10a.

166. **the blessed Holy One provided Abraham an opportunity in advance** By sending him the three messengers.

167. **although they were angels** Who require no food.

168. ***They ate*****, eaten by their fire!** By angelic fire. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:14; BT *Bava Metsi'a* 86b; *Da'at Zeqenim* (*Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*) on Genesis 18:8; *Zohar* 1:101b (*ST*), 102a, 144a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:236, n. 143.

169. **three angels: this one, fire; this one, water; this one, air!** The three angels are identified in BT *Bava Metsi'a* 86b, as Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. See *Zohar* 1:98b–99a (*ST*). Here they are associated respectively with water, fire, and air. The question is: How could all the angels have consumed the food by fire, if only one of them (Gabriel) was fiery?

170. **But each encompassed the other** Each of the three included all three elements.

171. **actually eating, feasting on *Shekhinah*!** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:10: "Rabbi Hosha'ya said, 'Did they [the nobles of Israel] take provisions up with them to Sinai, that it is written: *They beheld God* [*and they ate and drank*]?

Rather, this teaches that they feasted their eyes on *Shekhinah*, like a person looking at his friend while eating and drinking.' Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'Actual eating, as is said: *In the light of the king's face is life* (Proverbs 16:15).'"

Here Rabbi El'azar blends these two contrasting interpretations: The nobles of Israel enjoyed true nourishment, feasting on *Shekhinah*. A similar blend is offered by Ezra of Gerona (in Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 15) and Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittaḥon*, 377. See *Zohar* 2:126a.

172. **they generated nourishment from the side of Abraham...** By consuming the food offered by Abraham, the angels generated a nourishing flow of emanation from his *sefirah, Ḥesed*. According to Rabbi Yitsḥak (*Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*, 6:1; *Tanḥuma, Pinḥas* 12), angels "are nourished from the splendor of *Shekhinah*." See above, page 127.

173. **one should drink from the cup of blessing to attain blessing...** By drinking from a cup of wine at the conclusion of the blessing after meals, one stimulates a flow of blessing from above. See *Zohar* 1:250a.

174. **to deliver Lot** From Sodom.

175. ***Gaze from Your holy abode*** The verse continues: *—from heaven—and bless Your people Israel*.

176. **Just as there, compassion, so here, compassion** Rabbi El'azar overturns the interpretation of Rabbi Alexandri (*Tanḥuma*, *Ki Tissa* 14, adopted by Rashi on Genesis 18:16), according to whom the verb השקיף (*hishqif*), "to look down, gaze," always denotes suffering, except in Deuteronomy 26:15.

177. ***to send them off*—to escort them** See *Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ, Petiḥta; Tanḥuma, Beshallaḥ* 4; Rashi, ad loc.

178. **why did he escort them?** Surely, angels need no escort.

179. ***And YHVH said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham*** The verse continues: *what I am about to do?'*

180. **to join him** To join the other.

181. **So, *And YHVH said*** Because Abraham escorted his guests, God revealed Himself.

182. **Whatever He does… He does by means of the righteous…** With their assent or cooperation. See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 6: “Even when the blessed Holy One grew angry over Sodom because of their wicked deeds and sought to overturn Sodom, He did not seal their decree of punishment before conferring with Abraham, as is said: *And YHVH said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham* [*what I am about to do*]?’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:2; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 5–6; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 7; *Zohar* 1:104b (*MhN*).

183. **so they will have no pretext…** In order that the sinners will have no pretext, God divulges His secret to the righteous.

184. **Furthermore, so they cannot claim…** So the wicked cannot claim.

185. ***You will be clear before YHVH and before Israel*** See M *Sheqalim* 3:2.

186. **How?** How can sinners protect themselves?

187. **returning** Turning back to God.

188. ***Raise your eyes now and see*** The verse continues: *from the place where you are, to the north and south and east and west*.

189. **these places** Sodom and Gomorrah.

190. **I have already given the land to Abraham, so I must inform him…** See *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 5: “Why did the blessed Holy One reveal this to Abraham? Rabbi Yehudah son of Levi said, ‘A parable: A king had an orchard. He gave it to his beloved as a gift. Sometime later, the king had to cut down five of its tree trunks. He said, “Although it is mine, I gave it to my beloved as a gift, so it isn’t right to cut down anything until I consult with him.” Similarly, when Abraham went up to the land of Israel, the blessed Holy One said to him, “*Raise your eyes now and see from the place where you are, to the north and south and east and*

west, for all the land that you see I give to you.” Therefore when He sought to destroy these five cities [see *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:4], He said, “I am not going to destroy them without his knowledge.”… So when He was about to destroy them He consulted with Abraham, as is said: *And YHVH said, “Shall I hide* [*from Abraham what I am about to do?*”].’”

See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 7; *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:2.

191. **he did not plead with Him to save Lot from the punishment** See *Zohar* 1:111a. According to *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 25, at this point Abraham did plead for Lot. See David Luria, ad loc., n. 8.

192. **So as not to demand reward for his deeds** Abraham was too humble to demand that God save Lot on account of Abraham’s own righteousness.

193. **for Abraham’s sake…** By virtue of Abraham’s humility, without his having to ask. See above, note 164.

194. **What does this mean: *where Lot dwelled?*** Was he the only one living in those cities?

195. **except for Lot** So all the cities were inhabited only for his sake.

196. **Now, did Lot dwell in all of them?** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:6; *Sekhel Tov*, ad loc.; below, page 155.

197. **he learns from his ways…** The one serving learns from the ways of the righteous person.

198. **he learned to render kindness to creatures…** As when he welcomed the angels into his home in Sodom. See Genesis 19:1–3; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 11; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 15; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 25; *Zohar* 1:78b.

199. **the blessed Holy One appeared to him on this rung …*El Shaddai*** *Tif’eret*, known as “the blessed Holy One,” manifested to Abraham through *Shekhinah*, known as *El Shaddai* (“God of *Shaddai*”). *Shaddai* is an obscure divine name, which may mean “of the mountain.” The traditional rendering “Almighty God” is unjustified.

200. **First, ויהוה אמר (*Va-YHVH amar*), *And YHVH said*** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:2: “Rabbi El’azar said, ‘Wherever it is said: *And YHVH*, this implies: He and His Court.’” In Kabbalah this court symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* (“Judgment”) and pronounces the divine decree, so the phrase *And YHVH* encompasses “He [*Tif’eret*, known as *YHVH*] and His Court [*Shekhinah*].” Here Rabbi Shim’on implies that at first both these *sefirot* spoke to Abraham.

See JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14b; Rashi on Exodus 12:29; *Zohar* 1:15b, 64b, 107b; 2:37b, 44b; 3:149a. The hermeneutical significance of *and* was championed by Rabbi Akiva. See BT *Yevamot* 68b; *Sanhedrin* 51b.

201. **then, ויאמר יהוה (*Va-yomer YHVH*), *YHVH said*...** Then *Tif’eret* spoke alone, but still manifesting through *Shekhinah*.

202. **עשו כלה (*asu kalah*), *carry out annihilation*!** Rabbi Shim’on understands the phrase as a command, though its plain meaning is declarative. The verse is often understood as: *I will go down and see if asu kalah, they have done altogether, according to the cry that has come to Me*. See *Zohorei Ya’bets*.

203. **speaking with one and commanding another?** Speaking with Abraham, yet commanding the angels.

204. **in whose jurisdiction those places lay** Sodom and Gomorrah were part of the territory given by God to Abraham, so before destroying them He sought Abraham’s approval. See *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 5; above, page 140.

205. **Because of Abraham and *Shekhinah*, who did not depart from him** *YHVH* sought the approval of both.

206. **Alternatively, *asu*, to do, according to its translation: *they have done*** Understanding the verb as it is rendered in *Targum Onqelos:* עבדו (*avadu*), *they have done*. The verse would then mean: *I will go down and see if they have done altogether according to the cry that has come to Me*. See above, note 202.

207. **But didn’t the blessed Holy One know?...** How the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had acted. See

Sekhel Tov, ad loc: “Even though it is revealed before Me that it is so, I must consider their case in the presence of witnesses: Gabriel, Michael, and you, Lot.”

208. **from the rung of compassion to the rung of judgment…** When human wickedness demands judgment and punishment, this entails God’s descent from the heights of compassion. See Naḥmanides on Genesis 18:20; cf. JT *Ta’anit* 2:1, 65b; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:10.

209. ***God saw the Children of Israel, and He knew*** He saw their suffering in Egypt and took note of them.

210. **Therefore the blessed Holy One said, *Shall I hide from Abraham?*** Because He sought his consent.

211. **even when the blessed Holy One sits in judgment over the world** As here, over Sodom and Gomorrah.

212. **He does not change** His compassionate nature.

213. **That applies to an individual, this to the community…** God is accessible to an individual or in a particular location only at certain times, but is always accessible to the community or in the world as a whole. See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 18a.

214. **בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*)… באברהם (*be-Avraham*)…** According to Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Korḥah (*Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9), בהבראם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created*, is an anagram of באברהם (*be-Avraham*), “through Abraham,” indicating that the world was created for his sake. See *Zohar* 1:3b, 86b, 91b, 93a, 128b, 154b, 230b; 3:117a.

Here Rabbi El’azar draws on this midrashic teaching to indicate that Abraham is equivalent to the entire world and therefore constantly deserving of divine compassion.

215. **יהיה (*Yihyeh*), *Will become*… thirty righteous humans…** The word יהיה (*yihyeh*), *will become*, is numerologically equivalent to thirty, implying that the world will always contain at least thirty righteous heroes.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:3: "*Abraham* היו יהיה (*hayoh yihyeh*), *will surely become, a great and powerful nation*. Rabbi Tanḥum… said in the name of Rabbi Berekhiah, 'He assured him that the world would never lack thirty righteous humans like Abraham.' Rabbi Yudan and Rabbi Aḥa, in the name of Rabbi Alexandra deduced it from here: *Abraham* היה יהיה (*hayoh yihyeh*), *will surely become:* י (*yod*) is ten, ה (*he*) five, י (*yod*) ten, and ה (*he*) five."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 35:2; *ZḤ* 26b (*MhN*); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:239, n. 164.

216. ***Of the thirty he was most honored…*** The actual biblical verse does not include the word *most* (הכי [*ha-khi*]). Apparently, the author or a scribe substituted another phrase, several verses earlier, describing another of King David's warriors, Avishai: (*Of the three*) *he was most honored* (2 Samuel 23:19). See *Zohar* 1:6b.

217. **Benayahu son of Yehoyada…** A loyal follower of King David. See 2 Samuel 23:20–23; *Zohar* 1:6a–b.

218. **three others, on whom the world stands…** The three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who symbolize the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Rabbi El'azar son of Shamu'a says, '[The world stands] upon a single pillar named Righteous One, as is said: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*.'"

219. ***A torrent bursts forth against strangers, forgotten of foot…*** In rabbinic literature this and the following verses are often applied to Sodom and Gomorrah. See *Mekhilta, Shirta* 2; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 43; *Tosefta, Sotah* 3:12; BT *Sanhedrin* 109a; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 26:2; *Tanḥuma, Beshallaḥ 12*.

220. **being refused food or drink** See BT *Sanhedrin* 109b.

221. **there is written: *Her paths wander*** Referring to the *forbidden woman* (ibid., 3) who strays and leads men astray.

222. **Even birds of heaven avoided entering** … See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 25: "Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah said, '… They cut all [the branches of] the trees where fruit grew and above, so that there would be no benefit from them—even to the birds of heaven, as is said: *a path unknown to any vulture.*'"

223. **Sodom and Gomorrah and all those cities** There were five in all. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:4.

224. **why *if according to her cry*?…** Why the singular? See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 25: "Rabbi Yehudah said, 'They issued a proclamation in Sodom: Anyone who strengthens the hand of the poor or the strangers will be burnt by fire. Peletit daughter of Lot was married to one of the nobles of Sodom. She saw an afflicted poor man in the street of the city, and her soul grieved for him. What did she do? Every day when she went out to draw water, she put in her bucket all sorts of food from her home, and she fed that poor man. The people of Sodom said, 'How does this poor man survive?' Finally they discovered the matter—and brought her out to be burned. She said, 'Lord of the world! Uphold my just cause against the people of Sodom!' Her cry ascended before the Throne of Glory. The blessed Holy One said, "*I will go down and see* [*if they have done altogether*] *according to her cry that has come to Me*. If the people of Sodom have done according to the cry of this girl, I will overturn its foundations and its surface!"—as is said: *according to her cry*. It is not written: *according to their cry*, but rather: *according to her cry.*'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:6; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 18:21. Cf. *Sefer ha-Yashar, Vayera*, 104–6; *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 18:20; BT *Sanhedrin* 109b.

225. **side beneath the hailstone** The side of stern judgment, whose arousal is outlined in the following cryptic lines. On the phrase תותי קלא (*tutei qala*), "beneath the stone [or: clod]," see BT *Ta'anit* 4a.

226. **thick cluster כתפא** (*Katpa*), “Shoulder.” In M *Pe’ah* 7:4 and *Tosefta, Pe’ah* 3:11, the Hebrew equivalent refers to the dense top of a cluster of grapes.

227. **chasms of the immense abyss** The abode of demons.

228. **becoming five-in-one** Constituting five aspects of stern judgment.

229. **voices** Voices of accusation against evil.

230. **voice ascending from below** Apparently the voice of a wronged human calling out for justice.

231. **Decree of Judgment** The divine Attribute of Judgment. See Naḥmanides on Genesis 18:20.

232. **demanding justice for the sale of Joseph…** According to rabbinic sources, the selling of Joseph by his ten brothers was eventually punished through the martyrdom of ten rabbis during the Hadrianic persecution in the second century.

See *Heikhalot Rabbati* 5:5 (in *Battei Midrashot*, 1:74): “The Attribute of Judgment stood before the blessed Holy One and said, ‘Master of the World! You wrote in Your Torah: *One who steals a man and sells him…* [*will surely be put to death*] (Exodus 21:16). Now, the sons of Israel [Jacob] who stole their brother Joseph and sold him, what has happened to them?’ Immediately permission was granted to Samael to annihilate ten heroes in their place.”

See *Midrash Mishlei* 1:13; *Elleh Ezkerah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:64); *ZḤ* 93b (*MhN, Eikhah*).

233. ***In the evening she* באה (*ba’ah*), *comes*…** Describing the continual stream of maidens coming to King Ahasuerus in the contest to be crowned queen. The following verses describe Esther, so this verse is sometimes applied specifically to her and to the divine feminine, *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:202b; 3:220b.

234. **This is *ha-ba’ah, coming, to Me*, constantly** Reading the verb in the present tense rather than the past. The Attribute of Judgment constantly demands justice.

235. ***End of all flesh…*** The Angel of Death, looming constantly. See *Zohar* 1:35b, 54a, 58a, 62b.

236. **silent, saying nothing, not pleading for mercy** Noah is criticized for not saving his generation in *Devarim Rabbah* 11:3; *Zohar* 1:67b–68a; 3:14b–15a; *ZḤ* 23a (*MhN*).

237. **beginning with fifty, until ten** Abraham opened by pleading with God to save Sodom if there were fifty innocent people there, and he continued until reaching the number ten. See Genesis 18:23–32.

238. **Abraham said, 'I don't want to claim reward for my deeds'** He was too humble to demand that God save the residents of Sodom on account of his own merit. See above, page 141.

239. ***I forgive, according to your word*** This verse actually appears in the story of the spies in Numbers, not in the context of the Golden Calf.

See *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 31; *Shemot Rabbah* 51:4; *Devarim Rabbah* 3:15; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46, and David Luria, ad loc., n. 81; *Da'at Zeqenim* (*Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*) on Numbers 14:20; *Zohar* 3:14b.

240. **otherwise not** Abraham did not plead for the guilty themselves, as Moses had done.

241. **Moses, Faithful Shepherd** This title is applied to Moses in *Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ* 6; *Sifrei Zuta* 27; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 24; *Ester Rabbah* 7:13; *Rut Rabbah, Petiḥta* 5. See *Tanḥuma, Shemot 7*.

242. **beginning with fifty, beginning of knowing** See above, note 237. Here fifty symbolizes *Binah*, the highest *sefirah* accessible to human searching. She is linked with this number based on BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b: "Rav and Shemu'el both said, 'Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world, all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6).'"

243. **until ten, who is tithe, end of all rungs** Ten symbolizes *Shekhinah*, last of the ten *sefirot* and known as "tithe." See *Zohar* 1:87b.

244. **ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur** "The Ten Days of Returning [to God]."

245. **returning** Turning back to God.

246. ***as Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom…*** The verse continues: *Lot saw and rose to greet them and bowed, face to the ground*.

247. **Come and see what is written above: *YHVH left…*** In the preceding verse.

248. **since one disappeared with *Shekhinah*, leaving these two** Originally, three angels had appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18:2). See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 86b; and *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:2: "One angel does not perform two missions, nor do two angels perform one mission, yet the verse reads: [*The*] *two* [*angels came to Sodom*]*!* However, Michael delivered his tidings [of the birth of Isaac] and departed, Gabriel was sent to overturn Sodom, and Rafael to deliver Lot, so *The two angels came*…."

249. **Look how they punished his daughter!** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 25, cited above, note 224, and parallels listed there.

250. **Because it is written: *Lot saw and ran to greet them*** Because of what he saw, he ran to greet them. Actually, Genesis 19:1 does not mention running but reads rather: *Lot saw and rose to greet them*.

251. **Just as there he saw *Shekhinah*** Abraham saw *Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by *the opening of the tent* because She is the opening of the divine realm. See above, pages 119–20, 131–32.

252. **אדני (*Adonai*), *my Lord*, spelled אלף דלת נון יוד (*alef, dalet, nun, yod*)** The word is usually translated *my lords*, but can also be rendered *my Lord*, one of the names of *Shekhinah*.

See BT *Shevu'ot* 35b; Rashi on Genesis 18:3; 19:18; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 19:2, 18; *Minḥat Shai* on Genesis 18:3;

19:2, 18; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 6:9; above, page 125.

253. ***Please turn aside*** The verse continues: *to your servant's house and spend the night*.

254. **so that the townspeople wouldn't see** them… See *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:4: "*Please turn aside*…. Rabbi Huna said, 'Come to me by a circuitous route, so that you will not be seen approaching me.'"

255. **Torah is a tree of life** Torah is identified with the Tree of Life, based on the description of wisdom in Proverbs 3:18: *She is a tree of life to those who grasp her*. See BT *Berakhot* 32b, 61b.

256. **He watches over her constantly…** Over the land of Israel, symbolizing *Shekhinah*.

257. ***From afar she brings her food*** *Shekhinah* draws the flow of emanation from the highest reaches of the *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 2:50b; 3:60a, 90a.

258. **all those beasts of the field** The forces (including the *ḥayyot*, "living creatures, animals, beasts") beneath *Shekhinah*, who is known as "field" or Holy Apple Orchard.

See *Zohar* 1:29b, 142b; 2:61b. Cf. BT *Ta'anit* 29b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35–37.

259. **Now, who can see *Shekhinah*?** See Exodus 33:20: *No human can see Me and live!* Cf. BT *Ketubbot* 111b, *Sotah* 14a.

260. **'אדני (*Adonai*), *my Lord,'* spelled אלף דלת נון יוד (*alef, dalet, nun, yod*)…** The word is usually translated *my lords*, but can also be rendered *my Lord*, one of the names of *Shekhinah*. See above, note 252.

261. **so that people wouldn't discover them** If anyone saw them, it would seem as though they had just arrived, since the dust was still on their feet.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:4: "*Spend the night, and wash your feet*. Abraham first asked them to wash and then to

stay, while Lot first asked them to spend the night and then to wash. However, Abraham was strict about the pollution of idolatry, while Lot was not. Some say: Even this Lot did properly, so that when they left, the dust would be seen on their feet, and [the residents of Sodom] would not ask, 'Where did they spend the night?'"

262. ***He urged them strongly…*** The verse continues: *so they turned aside to him and entered his house*.

263. **a single messenger acts. Yet now we see two messengers. Why?…** See above, page 148; BT *Bava Metsi'a* 86b; and *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:2: "One angel does not perform two missions, nor do two angels perform one mission, yet the verse reads: [*The*] *two* [*angels came to Sodom*]! However [of the three angels who originally appeared to Abraham], Michael delivered his tidings [of the birth of Isaac] and departed, Gabriel was sent to overturn Sodom, and Rafael to deliver Lot, so *The two angels came*…."

264. ***Behold, the day of YHVH is coming, cruel with wrath*** The verse continues: *and fury, to make the earth a desolation and annihilate its sinners from it*. Later in this chapter (verse 19) Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned.

265. **Lower Court of Justice** Symbolizing *Shekhinah*, who derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment, Justice") and administers it to the world.

266. ***Is coming*—as has been said: *coming to Me*** The verse in Genesis reads: *I will go down and see if they have done altogether according to her cry that has come to Me*. See above, page 146, where the verb הבאה (*ha-ba'ah*) is understood in the present tense: *coming* [*to Me*], referring to the Attribute of Judgment who constantly demands justice.

267. **only after entering and obtaining authorization** See the description of Satan's itinerary in BT *Bava Batra* 16a: "He descends and seduces, ascends

and arouses wrath, obtains authorization, and seizes the soul."

See Rashi on BT *Shabbat* 89a, s.v. *ba hasatan; Zohar* 1:10b, 46b, 125a, 148a (*ST*), 152b; 2:33b, 268b.

268. ***End of all flesh…*** The Angel of Death. See above, note 235.

269. **Destroyer below** The Angel of Death.

270. ***I will make a human more precious than pure gold…*** In Isaiah the meaning is: *rarer than pure gold*, since nearly everyone will be destroyed, but Rabbi Ḥiyya understands it differently.

271. **these verses** From Isaiah.

272. **those above and below** Angels and human beings.

273. **Although this prophecy was proclaimed over Babylon** See Isaiah 13:1: *The oracle concerning Babylon, envisioned by Isaiah son of Amoz*.

274. ויהוה **(*Va-YHVH*), *And YHVH*…rung of Lower Court of Justice…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:2: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'Wherever it is said: *And YHVH*, this implies: He and His Court.'" In Kabbalah this court symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment, Justice") and pronounces the divine decree, so the phrase *And YHVH* encompasses "He [*Tif'eret*, known as *YHVH*] and His Court [*Shekhinah*]."

See JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14b; Rashi on Exodus 12:29; *Zohar* 1:15b, 64b; 2:37b, 44b; 3:149a. The hermeneutical significance of *and* was championed by Rabbi Akiva. See BT *Yevamot* 68b; *Sanhedrin* 51b.

275. **Executing judgment with compassion** To Rabbi Yitsḥak, the wording *And YHVH* implies that the punishment was tempered, since the divine name *YHVH* conveys compassion. See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 26; *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15; 33:3; *Zohar* 2:47b; 3:142b (*IR*).

276. ***from YHVH out of heaven*** The verse reads: *And YHVH rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah,*

from YHVH *out of heaven*.

277. ***God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out*** The verse continues: *of the midst of the upheaval*

278. **two entire nations issued from him** Ammon and Moab, descended from Lot and his daughters. See Genesis 19:30–38.

279. **among his descendants King David and King Solomon** David and his son Solomon were descended from Ruth the Moabite and Boaz. See Ruth 4:21–22.

280. **When judgment looms over the world…** See BT *Bava Qamma* 60a–b: "Rabbi Yosef taught: 'What is the meaning of the verse *None of you shall go out the door of his house until morning* (Exodus 12:22)? Once permission has been granted to the Destroyer, he does not distinguish between righteous and wicked.'… Our Rabbis taught: 'A plague in town? Keep your feet indoors.' … Our Rabbis taught: 'A plague in town? One should not walk in the middle of the road, because the Angel of Death walks there —for as soon as permission has been granted him, he strides brazenly.'"

See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 11; *Zohar* 1:63a, 68a–b, 69a, 101b–102a, 113a, 182b, 197b, 204b; 2:36a (*MhN*), 196a, 227a; 3:54a–b.

281. **Noah shut himself in the ark…** See *Zohar* 1:63a.

282. ***None of you shall go out the door of his house until morning*** During the last of the ten plagues while the Destroyer is killing the Egyptian firstborn.

283. **sinners in Hell are punished by water and fire** According to rabbinic literature, the yearlong punishment of the wicked in Hell is equally divided between fire and snow. See IT *Sanhedrin* 10:3, 29b; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 10:4; *Zohar* 1:62b, 68b, 238b.

284. **one from the side of water, one from the side of fire** Brimstone is apparently understood here as congealed sulfurous water. See *Zohar* 1:108a (*ST*).

285. **punishment of sinners in Hell lasts twelve months** See M *Eduyyot* 2:10: "[Rabbi Akiva] said, 'The judgment of the generation of the Flood lasted twelve months... The judgment of the wicked in Hell lasts twelve months.'" See above, note 283.

On the yearlong duration of the Flood, see Genesis 7:11; 8:14; *Bereshit Rabbah* 33:7; *Seder Olam Rabbah* 4; *Zohar* 1:68b.

286. **Soon the blessed Holy One takes pity upon them** God feels compassion for the sinners who have already suffered in Hell for one year.

287. **water pouring from above, boiling water from below like fire** The Flood consisted of freezing water raining down from the sky and boiling water surging up from the depths.

See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 33; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 22; *Zohar* 1:62a–b, 68b.

288. **This has already been discussed** According to M *Sanhedrin* 10:3, "The generation of the Flood has no share in the world to come; nor will they stand at the [Last] Judgment." In *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 32, opinions differ as to whether or not this generation will be judged in the hereafter.

See *Tosefta, Sanhedrin* 13:6; BT *Sanhedrin* 108a; *Zohar* 1:68b–69a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:184, n. 44.

289. **those of Sodom and Gomorrah will not arise** In M *Sanhedrin* 10:3, opinions differ as to whether the generation of Sodom will arise for judgment.

290. ***Brimstone and salt, all its land burning...*** The verse reads: *Brimstone and salt, all its land burning, nothing sown, nothing sprouting, no vegetation springing up in it, like the overturning of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which YHVH overturned in His anger and His fury.*

291. **Just as their land was destroyed forever and ever** Though according to Ezekiel 16:55, Sodom will return

to her former state. See *Shemot Rabbah* 15:21.

292. **did not revive the soul of the needy…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:6; BT *Sanhedrin* 109b; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 25; above, page 144.

293. **charity, which is life** See Proverbs 12:28: *In the path of charity is life*. Cf. 11:19; 21:21; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 34.

294. **blocked roads and paths for inhabitants of the world** See *Mekhilta, Shirta* 2; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 43; *Tosefta, Sotah* 3:12; BT *Sanhedrin* 109a; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 26:2; *Tanḥuma, Beshallaḥ* 12.

295. **All will arise—will arise for judgment** Including the inhabitants of Sodom. See M *Sanhedrin* 10:3; *Zohar* 1:69a; above, note 289.

296. ***these to shame and everlasting contempt*** The verse reads: *Many of those who sleep in the dust of earth will awake, these to everlasting life, these to shame and everlasting contempt*.

297. **Lot dwelled in them all…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:6; *Sekhel Tov*, ad loc.; above, page 141.

298. **King of Sodom… welcomed him on account of Abraham** Since Abraham had defeated the confederacy of eastern kings who attacked the King of Sodom and his fellow vassals. See Genesis 14.

299. ***His wife looked behind him*** The verse continues: *and she became a pillar of sat*. The phrase *behind him* is usually interpreted as "behind Lot."

300. **it means 'behind *Shekhinah*'** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 25; Naḥmanides on Genesis 19:17; *Zohar* 2:224b. In rabbinic literature the term *Shekhinah* is not overtly feminine, as in the *Zohar*.

301. **Behind Lot, for the Destroyer was following him** See *Zohar* 2:197a.

302. **He was the one who sent him away!** The two angels who visited Lot in Sodom told him to flee (Genesis 19:12–17). According to rabbinic tradition, one of these

angels was Gabriel, who overturned the city. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:2; BT *Bava Metsi'a* 86b; above, pages 148–50.

303. **as long as the Destroyer doesn't see a person's face…** See *Devarim Rabbah* 4:4; *Zohar* 1:63a, 68b.

304. **the blessed Holy One apportioned all nations…** According to rabbinic tradition, Israel is ruled directly by God, while the other seventy nations of the world are governed by angels or heavenly princes appointed by Him.

See Daniel 10:20; Septuagint, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; Jubilees 15:31–32; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 11:8, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; *Tanḥuma, Re'eh* 8; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 9:19; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 24; *Zohar* 1:46b, 61a, 84b; 2:33a, 151b; 3:298b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:204–5, n. 91.

305. **The blessed Holy One provides nourishment there first…** See BT *Ta'anit* 10a: "The land of Israel is watered by the blessed Holy One Himself, while the rest of the world is watered by a messenger…. The land of Israel drinks water directly from the rain, while the rest of the world drinks of the drippings."

See *Zohar* 1:84b; 2:152b; 3:209b; Naḥmanides on Deuteronomy 11:10.

306. ***In which*—in sanctity of the land…** The repetition of the phrase *in which* signifies the holiness of the land of Israel, in which dwells *Shekhinah*, the supernal land, culmination of the sefirotic realm of faith.

307. ***like the garden of YHVH, like the land of Egypt*** Describing the plain of Jordan, including Sodom and Gomorrah.

308. **it is unclear whether *the garden of YHVH*…** Is the verse identifying *the garden of YHVH* with the land of Egypt or with Sodom? Or is Sodom being compared with the Garden of Eden and with Egypt?

309. ***like the garden of YHVH*—containing total satisfaction and delight** Like the Garden of Eden.

310. **Just as *the garden of YHVH* needs no human watering** See Genesis 2:10: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden*.

311. **neither does Egypt** Which is watered by the Nile. See *Zohar* 3:268b.

312. **Since it possessed all delights of the world…** Since Sodom was so fertile and delightful, the residents wanted to keep it all for themselves. See the sources cited above, note 294.

313. **Whoever is lavish toward the poor…** See BT *Megillah* 28a: "Rabbi Neḥunya son of ha-Kanah was asked by his disciples, 'How did you live so long?' He replied, 'I never gained honor through shaming another, I never climbed into bed accompanied by another's curse, and I was generous with my money.'"

314. ***wheels*** מסבות (*Mesibbot*), "Those which are round, circles." NJV renders the opening clause: *He keeps turning events by His stratagems*.

315. **spins revolutions** מסבב סבובין (*Mesabbev sibbuvin*), playing on the philosophical expression מסבב הסיבות (*mesabbev ha-sibbot*), "revolves the turn of events."

See Radak on Isaiah 63:9; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 354; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 52a; *Zohar* 2:111b; Gersonides on 1 Kings 2:46; Ben Yehuda, *Dictionary*, s.v., *mesibbah, savav, sibbah, sibbuv;* Liebes, *Peraqim*, 328–29. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:70, where God is described as: מסבב הגלגל (*mesabbev ha-galgal*), "revolving the [celestial] sphere."

316. **cloaked dazzlers** קומרין טהירין (*Qumrin tehirin*), denoting heavenly powers, angelic or demonic. In *Zohar* 1:83a, the phrase refers to malevolent forces who block the ascent of an unworthy soul. See 1:251a (*Hash*).

Qumrin derives from the Greek *qamara*, "arched cover." See *Bereshit Rabbah* 31:11; M *Eruvin* 8:9–10; *Arukh*, s.v.

qmr; *Zohar* 1:61b.

Tehirin derives from the Aramaic root meaning "brightness, noon." One class of demons is named טהרי (*tiharei*), "noonday demons." See Psalms 91:6 and Rashi, ad loc; *Targum*, Song of Songs 4:6; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 6:24, Deuteronomy 32:24. The Hebrew root טהר (*thr*), "pure," lends this demonic name a euphemistic tone.

317. **As they act, so He transforms them** According to human action, God transforms the heavenly powers from a benevolent nature to a malevolent one, or vice-versa.

318. **in all that He commands them *on the face of the earth*** Through commanding the angels to convey blessing or punishment below.

319. **spelled בתחבולתו (*be-taḥbulato*), *by His device*** The word בתחבולותיו (*be-taḥbulotav*), *by His devices*, is spelled without the י (*yod*) and can thus be read in the singular: בתחבולתו (*be-taḥbulato*), *by His device*.

320. **kick-wheel** טיקלא (*Tiqla*), defined in *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178, as "a potter's wheel rotated by the feet, known [in Castilian] as *torno*." *Tiqla* is a Zoharic neologism derived from the root תקל (*tql*), "weigh," here perhaps linked with the Greek *kuklos*, "wheel." The word has a wide range of meaning in the *Zohar*: "scale, potter's wheel, hollow of the hand, fist, water clock (above, pages 82–83)."

See *Zohar* 2:95b–96b; David ben Judah he-Ḥasid, *Mar'ot ha-Ẓove'ot*, 53, 77; ibid., Matt, intro, 29; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 327–35.

321. **he can fashion as he imagines—this way or that...** See Jeremiah 18:2–6; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:13; and the *piyyut* for Yom Kippur: *ki hinneh ka-ḥomer*.

322. **Lower Court of Justice, a potter's wheel...** *Shekhinah*, who derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment, Justice") and administers it to the world. She is also known as *Sod ha-Efshar* ("Secret of the Possible"), since through Her, creation is continually formed and

transformed. See Matt, intro to *Mar'ot ha-Ẓove'ot*, by David ben Judah he-Ḥasid, 29.

323. **If they act well, that kick-wheel spins them to the right…** The potter's wheel, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, spins to the right (symbolizing *Ḥesed*) or to the left (*Din*), depending on human conduct. Here *tiqla* implies both "kick-wheel" and "scale" of judgment.

324. **Ishmael issued from him, since Abraham was then uncircumcised…** Since Abraham had not yet entered the covenant of circumcision, his firstborn son, Ishmael, was imperfect. See above, page 135.

325. **being perfected through his name, called אברהם (*Avraham*)…** אברם (*Avram*) was transformed into אברהם (*Avraham*) by the addition of the letter ה (*he*), symbolizing *Binah*, the Divine Mother. She is also known as Spirit, from which derives Water, symbolizing *Ḥesed*, the *sefirah* of Abraham. See *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:11; *Zohar* 1:96a; *ZḤ* 72b (*ShS*).

326. **Isaac issued from him: holy seed… fire from water** Isaac represents *Gevurah*, also symbolized by fire, which issues from *Ḥesed*, symbolized by water. The phrase "fire from water" derives from *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:12. See above, page 136.

327. ***I planted you as a choice vine, entirely seed of truth*** The House of Jacob, addressed by Jeremiah (2:4), derives from holy seed, while Jacob himself symbolizes *Tif'eret*, known as Truth. See above, page 112.

328. **Other Side** סטרא אחרא (*Sitra aḥra*), the demonic realm.

329. **two separate nations** Moab and Ammon. See Genesis 19:30–38.

330. **side befitting them** The left side. See *Zohar* 1:13a.

331. **revolves revolutions, rotates rotations** … God brings about events in the world purposefully. See above, note 315; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 299–300.

332. **linked to the site befitting them** The incestuous union of Lot and his daughters engendered nations linked to the demonic realm.

333. **They were generated from wine mysteriously…** Lot's daughters made him drunk with wine, symbolizing the left side, so that Moab and Ammon would emerge from that side. Similarly, Noah *drank of the wine and became drunk, and exposed himself inside his tent*. See *Zohar* 1:73a–b; 2:245a (*Heikh*).

334. **by them** By Lot's daughters.

335. ***Moab*** The verse reads: *The firstborn gave birth to a son and named him Moab. He is the father of Moab to this day.*

336. ***The younger one also gave birth to a son and named him Ben-Ammi***. The verse continues: *He is the father of the children of Ammon to this day.*

337. **Impudently she said… Decorously she said…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:11; BT *Nazir* 23b; Rashi on Genesis 19:37; *Zohar* 3:188a.

338. ***He was unaware of her lying down …or her rising*** The verse reads: *That night they made their father drink wine, and the firstborn one went in and lay with her father; he was unaware of her lying down or her rising.*

339. ובקוֻמה **(*Uvqumah*), *or her rising*—spelled with a** ו **(*vav*), dotted above…** The word ובקוֻמה (*uvqumah*) is spelled with a second ו (*vav*), a letter of the divine name יהוה (*YHVH*). Furthermore, this letter is dotted. Both these Masoretic details invite midrashic interpretation and, according to Rabbi Yose, imply divine assistance. God approved and encouraged this apparently sinful act, since the Davidic Messiah is destined to descend from Ruth the Moabite.

See Ruth 4:21–22; *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:8; *Zohar* 1:188a–b; Liebes, "Sefer Tsaddiq Yesod Olam," 87–88, n. 88.

On this and other dotted letters in the Torah, see *Sifrei*, Numbers 69; BT *Nazir* 23a, *Bava Metsi'a* 87a; *Soferim* 6:3;

Avot de-Rabbi Natan A, 34; B, 37; *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.

340. **Concerning the other, it is written: ובקמה** (*uvqumah*), ***or her rising…*** The verse reads: *They made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger one arose and lay with him; he was unaware of her lying down or her rising*. Here the word ובקמה (*uvqumah*), *or her rising*, is written without a second ו (*vav*), since the Messiah ("a share of the blessed Holy One") did not issue from this second union.

Actually, Na'amah the Ammonite, one of Solomon's wives, was the mother of King Rehoboam in the Davidic line (1 Kings 14:21). According to one view, the Messiah is descended not from Na'amah and Solomon's son Rehoboam but from a different son of David: Nathan. See *Zohar* 3:173b; *Zohorei Ya'bets; NZ*, ad loc., n. 1, and on this passage, n. 3.

341. ***She rose before one person could recognize another*** Describing Ruth's action after sleeping with Boaz. The verse reads: *She lay at his feet until dawn. She rose before one person could recognize another*. The similar verbs in Genesis and Ruth link Lot's firstborn daughter with her descendant, Ruth the Moabite.

342. **That day she really rose—for Boaz united with her *to raise*…** That day Ruth rose in stature, because her marriage to Boaz enabled her to have a son who would carry on the name of her dead husband.

343. **Come and see the humility of Abraham!** … See above, pages 140–41. According to *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 25, at this point Abraham did plead for Lot. See David Luria, ad loc., n. 8.

344. **deducted any of his merit** Deducted some of Abraham's merit in exchange for having saved Lot.

345. **against five mighty kings** Actually against four kings who were attacking five Canaanite vassal kings. See Genesis 14; below, page 167.

346. **Lot's improper conduct** Lot is often portrayed negatively in rabbinic literature. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40(41):17 (on Genesis 13:10); 51:6, 9; 52:2; BT *Nazir* 23a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:240, n. 171; *Zohar* 1:79a, 84a.

347. **Abraham did not want the blessed Holy One—simply for his sake…** Abraham did not want God to forgive anything Lot had done, simply for Abraham's sake.

348. **All his journeyings were toward the side of the South…** South symbolizes the warmth of *Ḥesed* ("Love"), Abraham's spiritual domain.

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*), 98a, 118a; 2:36a; 3:14a.

349. **he acted in wisdom, cleaving to the South** See BT *Bava Batra* 25b: "Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'One who desires to become wise should turn to the south [when praying]; one who desires to become rich should turn to the north.'"

350. ***Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister"*** Visiting the royal city of Gerar, Abraham pretends that Sarah is his sister, so that King Abimelech will not kill him and steal his wife.

351. **A person should not rely on a miracle** See BT *Pesaḥim* 64b; *Zohar* 1:230a–b.

352. **miracles do not happen every moment** See BT *Megillah* 7b: "[Rabbi Zeira said,] 'Miracles do not happen every moment.'" Cf. *Pesaḥim* 50b.

353. **If a person puts himself in obvious danger…** See BT *Shabbat* 32a: "Rabbi Yannai… said, 'A person should never stand in a place of danger, saying that a miracle will be performed for him; perhaps it will not. And if a miracle is performed for him, it is deducted from his merits.' Rabbi Ḥanin said, 'Which verse demonstrates this? *I am diminished by all the kindness and faithfulness* [*You have shown Your servant*].'"

The verb in Genesis, קטנתי (*qatonti*), is usually rendered: *I am unworthy*, but Rabbi Ḥanin reads it hyperliterally: *I am*

diminished.

354. **Since Abraham had already gone up from Egypt and been saved once** See Genesis 12:10–20; above, pages 19–29.

355. **he saw *Shekhinah* abiding constantly with Sarah…** So he felt sure that She would protect both of them. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 60:16; *Zohar* 1:50a, 82a, 133a, 140b; 3:52a.

356. ***She is my sister… "You are my sister"*** *Shekhinah* is known as Lower Wisdom, deriving from the *sefirah* of *Ḥokhmah* ("Wisdom"). The verse in Proverbs is applied to Her, and similarly, Abraham called Her *sister*. See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 20; *Zohar* 1:81b, 140b.

357. **appointed messenger assigned to them…** The name *Elohim* is associated with the divine attribute of Judgment (*Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 26; *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15; 33:3) and can refer to angelic messengers assigned to carry out acts of judgment. See *Zohar* 2:96a; 3:8a, 113a, 200a.

358. ***You are about to die because of the woman you have taken*** The verse continues: *for she is a wedded wife!*

359. **because of *Shekhinah*—who accompanied Sarah—he said *She is my sister*** See above, page 162.

360. **Since Abraham constitutes the right side…** Abraham symbolizes *Ḥesed*, on the right side of the sefirotic tree, below *Ḥokhmah* ("Wisdom"). Since emanation flows from *Ḥesed* to *Shekhinah*, Abraham was intimate with Her.

361. ***My sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one!*** The beloved female in Song of Songs is identified with *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:140b.

362. **At last** After God ordered Abimelech to return Sarah to Abraham.

363. **Was it so?** Sarah was not the daughter of Terah, Abraham's father, but rather—according to rabbinic tradition—the daughter of Haran, Abraham's brother.

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 11:29; BT *Megillah* 14a; *Midrash Tehillim* 118:11; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1:6:5.

364. **Why *ve-gam?* To amplify…** In rabbinic hermeneutics the word גם (*gam*), "also, besides," amplifies the literal meaning of a biblical word or phrase. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:14; JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14b.

365. ***my sister, my father's daughter*, daughter of supernal Wisdom** *Shekhinah*, who derives from the *sefirah* of *Ḥokhmah* ("Wisdom"), is considered His daughter and is called "Lower Wisdom." Since *Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham, also derives from *Ḥokhmah*, Abraham and *Shekhinah* are siblings.

366. ***though not my mother's daughter*** *Shekhinah*, "Lower Wisdom," is more closely related to *Ḥokhmah* than to *Binah*. See *Zohar* 3:100b.

367. **realm of origin of all, concealed, supreme** *Ḥokhmah*, the primordial point of emanation.

368. ***his right hand embracing me*** According to Kabbalah, these words are spoken by *Shekhinah*, describing how She is embraced by *Ḥesed*, the divine right hand.

369. **faith** *Shekhinah*, who includes all the *sefirot*, the aspects of divine reality.

370. **foreign rungs** The demonic realm. See *Zohar* 2:242b.

371. ***for his virgin sister, spoken of the priest…*** A priest is forbidden to defile himself by contact with the dead, but an exception is made for his close relatives, including *his virgin sister*. Here the priest symbolizes *Ḥesed*, Abraham's *sefirah*.

372. ***YHVH your God you shall hold in awe, and Him you shall serve…*** The verse reads: *Him you shall serve*, not *and Him you shall serve*.

373. **This verse has been established** See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b: "Rabbi Akiva came and taught: 'את יהוה (*Et YHVH*), *YHVH, your God you shall hold in awe*—including

scholars.’” The hermeneutical principle is explained below, note 375.

374. **It is not written: ליהוה (*La-YHVH*) *your God*…** The preposition ל (*la*) does not appear here, but rather the accusative particle את (*et*).

375. **What is את (*Et*)? First rung…** Grammatically, the accusative particle את (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when *et* appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:90a, 135b.

In the *Zohar* the word את (*et*) symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who comprises the entire alphabet of divine speech, from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*). See the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: “I am *alpha* and *omega*.”

Shekhinah, last of the ten *sefirot*, is the first one encountered by the spiritual seeker. She inspires awe.

376. **this being the Court of Justice** Shekhinah derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* (“Judgment, Justice”) and administers it to the world.

377. **ואותו (*Ve-Oto*), *And Him, you shall serve*—higher rung…** *Yesod*, the masculine partner of *Shekhinah*.

378. **What is ואותו (*ve-oto*)? Site of the holy covenant, eternal אות (*ot*), sign** *Yesod*, the divine phallus, is symbolized by circumcision, the covenantal sign. See *Shemot Rabbah* 1:20; *Zohar* 1:94a; 3:184a.

379. **service does not pertain to *Et*… service focuses above…** If *Shekhinah* becomes the focus of worship, She is cut off from Her partner. By focusing on *Yesod*, the human worshiper stimulates the union of the divine couple.

380. **where cleaving cleaves, the torso abiding in the center** *Tif’eret*, central *sefirah* and trunk of the divine body.

381. ***By His name*… seventh of rungs** *Shekhinah*, seventh of the lower *sefirot*, conveys the divine essence and is thus known as *His name*. See *Zohar* 1:204b.

382. **Your mnemonic: *David their king, whom I will raise…*** King David symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is known as *Malkhut* (“Kingdom”). His restoration reflects Her reunion with the higher *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 1:72b; 2:240a.

383. **faith** *Shekhinah*.

384. ***I did this with an innocent heart and clean hands*** “When I took Sarah, I thought she was Abraham’s sister, not his wife.”

385. **while *clean hands* are not mentioned** See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 25: “*God said to him in a dream, ‘Yes, I know that you did this with an innocent heart.’* The blessed Holy One said, ‘About one you spoke truly; about one you lied! Innocence of heart is here, but not cleanness of hands.’ Know that it is so: *Clean hands* are not mentioned here, only *an innocent heart.*”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 52:6: “This indicates there was fondling by hand.” See Theodor, ad loc.; Rashi on Genesis 20:6.

386. ***He guards the feet of… His faithful ones…*** The full verse reads: *He guards the feet of His faithful ones, but the wicked are silenced in darkness, for not by might does one prevail*.

387. **spelled חסידו (*ḥasido*), *His faithful one*** The abbreviated spelling (without a suffixal י [*yod*]) enables Rabbi Yehudah to read the word in the singular. See BT *Yoma* 38b; *Midrash Shemu’el* 5:16; *Aggadat Bereshit* 46:3; *Zohar* 1:189a.

388. **As to the expression *the feet of*, this means ‘his wife’** See 2 Samuel 11:8: *Go down to your house and bathe your feet*. See ibid., 11; *Zohar* 1:8b; cf. Ruth 3:7.

Similarly, God’s command to Moses, *Remove your sandals from your feet* (Exodus 3:5), is interpreted to mean: “Refrain from intercourse with your wife.” See *Zohar* 2:222a; 3:148a, 180a; *ZḤ* 59b.

389. **on the night he pursued them** On the night Abraham pursued them.

390. ***silenced by darkness*—night linked with darkness…** The word בחשך (*ba-ḥoshekh*) can be rendered: *in darkness* or *by darkness*. Here night symbolizes *Shekhinah*, while darkness symbolizes Her source of power, *Gevurah*.

See *Zohar* 1:133a, 136a, 142a, 168b.

391. ***He divided himself against them by night, he and his servants…*** The simple meaning is that Abraham divided or deployed his forces against the kings.

392. ***He divided himself against them by night*—the blessed Holy One…** The subject is no longer Abraham but God, who by withdrawing compassion enabled unmitigated judgment to attack. See *Zohar* 1:92b.

393. **The verse should read: *And they smote them*** Since the subject is Abraham and his forces.

394. **he and Eliezer were all alone** According to Genesis 14:14, Abraham mustered 318 men to fight the kings. Midrashic tradition interprets this number as signifying Abraham's servant, Eliezer. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 42(43):2: "*Three hundred and eighteen*. Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish said, 'It was Eliezer alone, the numerical value of אליעזר (*Eli'ezer*) being 318.'"

395. **Where danger prevails, one should not rely on a miracle** See BT *Qiddushin* 39b: "Wherever injury is likely, we do not rely on a miracle." Cf. *Shabbat* 32a; above, page 162.

396. **Abraham pursued five kings to wage war!** Actually, Abraham pursued four kings who were attacking five Canaanite vassal kings. See Genesis 14; above, page 161.

397. **he took money to ransom him** See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Lekh Lekha* 16; *Aggadat Bereshit* 13:3.

398. **he saw *Shekhinah* shining in front of him** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 42(43):3 (on Genesis 14:15).

399. **Isaac joined him, and they fell before him… *silenced in darkness…*** Abraham, who symbolizes *Ḥesed*,

was empowered by *Gevurah*, symbolized by Isaac and *darkness*. See *Zohar* 1:133a, 142a, 168b.

400. **might always manifests on the right** See Exodus 15:6: *Your right hand, O YHVH, majestic in might; Your right hand, O YHVH, shatters the enemy*. See *Zohar* 1:86b.

401. **if it had not been encompassed by the left side** If *Ḥesed* on the right (symbolized by Abraham) had not been joined by *Gevurah* on the left (symbolized by Isaac).

402. ***feet of His faithful one*—his wife** See above, note 388.

403. ***YHVH plagued Pharaoh …at the word of…*** The full verse reads: *YHVH plagued Pharaoh and his household with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife*. Drawing on midrash, Rabbi Shim'on reads the phrase על דבר שרי (*al devar*), *because of Sarai* hyperliterally: *at the word of Sarai*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 40(41):2: "על דבר (*Al devar*), *At the word of, Sarai*… Rabbi Levi said, 'That whole night an angel was standing with a whip in his hand. When she said, "Strike!" he struck; when she said, "Stop!" he stopped.'"

404. **Site of the bundle in which souls are bound** See 1 Samuel 25:29: *The soul of my lord will be bound in the bundle of life*. Here the phrase describes *Shekhinah*, destination of the soul. See *Zohar* 1:65b, 224b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 60–61 (75).

405. **This is *the angel of YHVH*** One of the many names of *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:61a, 120b, 166a, 230a; 3:187a. Cf. *Mekhilta, Shirta* 3.

406. ***And Satan*… evil impulse…** See BT *Bava Batra* 16a: "Resh Lakish said, 'Satan, the evil impulse, and the Angel of Death are one and the same.'"

407. **when Nebuchadnezzar cast him into the fire…** According to BT *Sanhedrin* 93a, King Nebuchadnezzar cast Joshua the high priest into the fire along with the false prophets Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah. The two false prophets burned

to death, while Joshua emerged with only his clothes singed. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 33, and David Luria, ad loc., n. 95.

408. **this one** Satan.

409. **accusing only in time of danger** See *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 23:10: "Satan accuses only in time of danger." Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 91:9; JT *Shabbat* 2:6, 5b.

410. ***Some are swept away by injustice*** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:8; BT *Ḥagigah* 4b–5a; *Zohar* 1:119a; 2:196a, 249a (*Heikh*); 3:54b, 59b, 283b, 291b (*IZ*); *ZḤ* 77c (*MhN, Rut*).

411. **Either they should all be saved, or they should all be burned!** Joshua and both false prophets.

412. **once the Destroyer is empowered... the innocent is not spared...** See BT *Bava Qamma* 60a–b: "Rabbi Yosef taught: 'What is the meaning of the verse *None of you shall go out the door of his house until morning* (Exodus 12:22)? Once permission has been granted to the Destroyer, he does not distinguish between righteous and wicked.' ... Our Rabbis taught: 'A plague in town? Keep your feet indoors.'... Our Rabbis taught: 'A plague in town? One should not walk in the middle of the road, because the Angel of Death walks there—for as soon as permission has been granted him, he strides brazenly.'"

See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 11; *Zohar* 1:63a, 68a–b, 69a, 102a, 107b, 182b, 197b, 204b; 2:36a (*MhN*), 196a, 227a; 3:54a–b.

413. **drowning the others** The Egyptians.

414. **miracle here, and judgment here—simultaneously!** See above, page 143.

415. **That's what was difficult for Him!** In rabbinic literature the supernatural feat of splitting the Red Sea serves as a paradigm of difficulty. Heavenly matchmaking of human couples and the nourishing of humanity are "as difficult as splitting the Red Sea." See *Bereshit Rabbah*

68:4; 97(98):3 (on Genesis 48:16); BT *Pesaḥim* 118a, *Sotah* 2a.

416. **above, everything is enacted completely… not in half** See BT *Yoma* 69b: "They do not grant half in heaven." Cf. *Zohar* 3:21a.

417. **until their guilt is complete…** See BT *Sotah* 8b–9a: "Rabbi [Judah the Prince] used to say, 'How do we know that according to the measure with which one measures, it is measured out to him? As is said: *By exact measure, by exiling her You strive with her.'*… Rav Hamnuna said: 'The blessed Holy One does not punish a person until his peck is full.'" Cf. Rashi on Genesis 15:16; *Zohar* 1:61b, 121b.

The verse from Genesis explains why Abraham's descendants can inherit the Promised Land only in the distant future.

418. **he accused Joshua, demanding that he be burned along with them** Satan demanded that all three be burned together since half-miracles are so difficult.

419. ***angel of YHVH*** *Shekhinah.* See above, note 405.

420. **Now,** if **you** say, ***'YHVH said to Satan, "YHVH rebuke you, Satan!"'*** Obviously the subject is *YHVH*, not *the angel of YHVH*.

421. **Sometimes, *the angel of YHVH;* sometimes, *YHVH*** Both names can refer to *Shekhinah*. On *YHVH* as a name of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 2:215a; 3:9b, 166a.

422. **He said to him *YHVH rebuke you, Satan*!…** *Shekhinah* (*the angel of YHVH*) called upon *YHVH* to rebuke Satan; She did not rebuke him Herself.

423. **day that judgment appears in the world** Rosh Hashanah, when the world is judged. The Torah reading for the first day of Rosh Hashanah opens with Genesis 21:1: *YHVH attended to Sarah*, the same verse that stimulates Rabbi Ḥiyya's discourse (above, page 168). According to rabbinic tradition, Sarah conceived on Rosh Hashanah. See

Bereshit Rabbah 73:1; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 17; BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 10b–11a.

424. ***The elders of that city shall take a heifer…*** The context is an unsolved murder, which is atoned for by killing a heifer and making a public declaration.

425. **break its neck with a hatchet** See M *Sotah* 9:5: "They break its neck with a hatchet from behind." Normally, ritual slaughter is performed at the altar by cutting the front of the neck with a knife.

426. **lured after this one!** After Satan.

427. **So, *The land will not be purged…*** The murder can be atoned for only by the death of the murderer, who deprived the Angel of Death of the victim's soul.

428. **he stands poised to seduce the world…** The subject is Satan.

429. **so they offer this calf…** God compassionately provides Israel with a stratagem to appease the satanic Angel of Death. The theme of assuaging demonic powers by granting them their share appears frequently in the *Zohar*. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46: "They gave him [Satan] a bribe on Yom Kippur [i.e., the scapegoat] so that he would not nullify Israel's sacrifice."

According to Leviticus 16, a scapegoat bearing the sins of Israel is offered on Yom Kippur to the wilderness demon Azazel. Similarly, in the Babylonian Akitu ritual a goat, substituted for a human being, is offered to Ereshkigal, goddess of the Abyss.

See Naḥmanides on Leviticus 16:8; *Zohar* 1:11a, 64a, 65a, 138b, 174b, 190a, 210b; 2:154b, 237b, 266b; 3:63a (*Piq*), 102a, 202b–203a, 258b; *ZḤ* 87b–c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 49; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:890–95.

430. **Ox, cow, calf, heifer—all manifesting in supernal mystery…** In Ezekiel's vision of the heavenly throne, the creatures carrying the throne *had the face of an ox on the left* (Ezekiel 1:10). In Kabbalah the ox symbolizes

the left side, origin of the demonic, so it is appropriate that a heifer is offered here.

431. ***Our hands did not spill this blood…*** The full verse reads: *They* [*the city's elders*] *shall declare: "Our hands did not spill this blood, our eyes did not see."* See M *Sotah* 9:6; and BT *Sotah* 46b: "Would it enter our minds that [the members of] a Court of Justice spill blood? Rather, '[The victim] did not come to us and leave our presence without food. We did not see him and let him go unescorted.'"

432. **sound blended of fire, water, and air, becoming one** The sound of the shofar, generated by warm, moist breath, comprises three of the four elements. See *Zohar* 2:81b, 184b; 3:38b, 99b (*RM*), 261a.

433. **site of the Throne of Judgment** *Shekhinah*, who derives from the quality of *Din* ("Judgment") and conveys it to the world.

434. **voice of Jacob** Symbolizing *Tif'eret*. See Genesis 27:22; *Zohar* 3:18a–b, 100a.

435. **so too above a shofar is aroused** Symbolizing *Binah*, source of the seven lower *sefirot*.

436. **that sound blended of fire, water, and air harmonizes** The three elements symbolize the triad of *sefirot* issuing from *Binah: Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

437. **Then that accuser is confounded** See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16a–b: "Why do we sound a plain blast and a tremolo blast while sitting and then again while standing? In order to confound Satan."

See Rabbeinu Ḥananel on BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 35a (cited in *NZ*, 3:99b, n. 8); *Arukh*, s.v., *arev; Tosafot*, BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b, s.v., *kedei le-arbev; Zohar* 1:152a (*ST*); 2:184a–b, 196b, 237b–238a; 3:99b; *TZ* 21, 51b.

438. **Rather, compassion joins judgment** … See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15.

439. **בכסא (*ba-kese*), *at the covering*** This rare word, spelled בכסה (*ba-keseh*) in the Masoretic text, is usually

rendered *on the full moon*, but here Rabbi Shim'on interprets it according to the common root כסה (*ksh*), "to cover, conceal." See *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.; Proverbs 7:20.

440. **moon is concealed...** See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 8a–b: "*Blow the shofar at the new moon, at the covering for our feast day*. Which is the feast on which the moon is covered? You must say it is Rosh Hashanah." Cf. *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:6.

Here the moon symbolizes *Shekhinah*, whose light is concealed by the demonic powers. Alternatively, She conceals Herself from the demonic powers. See *Zohar* 1:131a; 2:184a; 3:100b, 231b, 275a. Correspondingly, when *Shekhinah* is weakened, the power of the demonic grows dominant. See 1:19b, 70b, 146a.

441. **so he cannot approach** So Satan cannot approach *Shekhinah* to imbibe Her power or defile Her. See *Zohar* 1:138b; *ZḤ* 20C (*MhN*).

442. **like someone roused from sleep** The expression appears in *Zohar* 2:114a; 3:136b (*IR*), 293b (*IZ*).

443. **On Yom Kippur one must pacify and appease him with that goat...** See above, note 429.

444. **arousal of compassion ascending from below** Through the sounding of the shofar.

445. **makes Himself available throughout those ten days...** See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 18a; *Tanḥuma, Ha'azinu* **4.**

446. **deferring them until Yom Kippur** When forgiveness is actually granted.

447. **All depends on action and words, as we have established** The act of sounding the shofar and the words of prayer. Human words and action stimulate the powers above.

See *Zohar* 1:35a, 77b, 82b, 86b, 88a, 164a, 244a; 2:31b, 265a; 3:92a, 110b, 120b.

448. **"attending" for the female, "remembering" for the male** Actually, the verb *remember* also appears for

the female, as in Genesis 30:22: *God remembered Rachel*. See *Zohar* 1:115b (*MhN*). Here, however, "the female" refers to the divine subject, not the human object, as indicated below. See *Zohar* 1:159b.

449. ***I will surely return to you when life is due*** The verse continues: *and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son!*

450. **The anonymous wording—*He said … implies…*** The anonymous subject is *Shekhinah*, the divine female, referred to here by the masculine pronoun. See *Zohar* 1:102b, 138a, 142b, 173b; 2:60b, 125b, 131a.

451. **Fruit of the handiwork… souls of the righteous** Souls are generated by the union of the divine couple, the blessed Holy One and *Shekhinah*. This fruit originates in the stream of emanation issuing from *Ḥokhmah* (symbolized by Eden).

On souls as fruit, see *Bahir* 14 (22); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489, 504; *Zohar* 1:15b, 19a, 33a, 59b–60a, 82b, 85b; 2:223b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 51; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69). Cf. Ibn Ezra on Psalms 1:3.

452. **flux of destiny** מזלא (*Mazzala*), "Constellation, planet, planetary influence, destiny, guardian angel." In the *Zohar* it is associated with the root נזל (*nzl*), "to flow," and often refers to the flow of emanation from the world of the male, which comprises *Binah* through *Yesod*, the divine phallus. *Yesod* conveys this flow and waters *the garden* of *Shekhinah*, engendering new souls.

453. **children depend on this flux of destiny, not on any other site** See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 28a: "Rava said, 'Life, children, and sustenance do not depend on merit but on *mazzala*, destiny.'"

See *Zohar* 1:43b (*Heikh*), 137a, 156b, 159b, 160b, 181a, 207b; 2:6a, 252b (*Heikh*); 3:25b, 77b, 134b (*IR*), 289a (*IZ*), 292b (*IZ*), 295b (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*,

193; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 65 (82); Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 12a, 37a–b, 74a, 95a.

454. **So it is written: *And YHVH attended… YHVH did…*** Whereas *YHVH* signifies *Tif'eret*, the conjunction *And* signifies *Shekhinah*.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:2: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'Wherever it is said: *And YHVH*, this implies: He and His Court.'" In Kabbalah this court symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment") and pronounces the divine decree, so the phrase *And YHVH* encompasses "He [*Tif'eret*, known as *YHVH*] and His Court [*Shekhinah*]."

See JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14b; Rashi on Exodus 12:29; *Zohar* 1:15b, 64b, 105a, 107b; 2:37b, 44b; 3:149a. The hermeneutical significance of *and* was championed by Rabbi Akiva. See BT *Yevamot* 68b; *Sanhedrin* 51b.

Here the point is that *Shekhinah* (acting in conjunction with *Tif'eret*) attended to Sarah, while the matriarch's actual conception was brought about by *Tif'eret* Himself, conveying the flux.

455. **one who attains children in this world thereby gains entrance…** See BT *Bava Batra* 116a: "Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai, 'Whoever does not leave a son to succeed him incurs the full wrath of the blessed Holy One.'"

Cf. *Zohar* 1:13a, 48a, 90a, 186b, 228b; *ZḤ* 89b (*MhN, Rut*).

456. **Who is *heritage of YHVH?* Land of the Living** *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:65b–66a, 95b, 124b, 143b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 62 (77).

457. **land of Israel—Land of the Living** See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 34: "The land of Israel is called 'living,' as is said: *I will set beauty in the land of the living* (Ezekiel 26:20)." Cf. *Targum Yonatan*, ad loc.; BT *Ketubbot* 111a. In Kabbalah the land of Israel symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

458. **Tree of Life** Symbolizing *Tif'eret*.

459. ***From Me your fruit appears*** See *Zohar* 1:85b; 2:223b.

460. **Masters of judgment** Angels blocking the soul's path.

461. **guarantors in this world…** His children.

462. **Open your mouth** See BT *Berakhot* 22a, *Eruvin* 54a; *Zohar* 2:4a; 3:79a, 105b; *ZḤ* 85b (*MhN, Rut*).

463. **whenever people engage in words of Torah, *Shekhinah*** comes… See M *Avot* 3:2: "Rabbi Ḥananya son of Teradyon said, '… If two are sitting engaged in words of Torah, *Shekhinah* dwells between them.'"

On the importance of engaging in Torah while on a journey, see Deuteronomy 6:7; BT *Eruvin* 54a; *Ta'anit* 10b; *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 69b–70a, 76a, 87a.

464. **As long as the wife is concealed *in the recesses of your house…*** See *Tanḥuma, Vayishlaḥ* 6; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 8:9; *Midrash Tehillim* 128:3. Cf. *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:11; BT *Yoma* 47a.

465. **Just as a vine can be planted only… cannot be grafted…** See JT *Kil'ayim* 1:7, 27b: "[Rabbi Levi said,] '*Your wife like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house; your children like olive shoots around your table*. Just as olives cannot be grafted, so *your children* will include no unworthy offspring.'"

Here Rabbi Yose transplants the simile from the end of the verse to the beginning.

See BT *Sotah* 43b; *Midrash Shemu'el* 16; *Zohar* 1:26a (*TZ*), 239b; 3:125b, 247a (*RM*); *TZ 15*, 30b, 69, 111a; Löw, *Die Flora der Juden*, 1:166.

466. **Just as leaves of olive trees do not shed all year long…** See BT *Menaḥot* 53b: "Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi said, 'Why is Israel compared to an olive tree? To inform you that just as leaves of an olive tree do not shed either in summer or in winter, so Israel will never pass away either in this world or in the world that is coming.'"

467. **The verse should read: הנה כן (*Hinneh khen*), *Behold, so*** Why the apparently superfluous כי (*ki*), *surely?*

468. **to amplify the meaning** לאסגאה (*Le-asga'ah*), "To increase," a Zoharic rendering of the rabbinic Hebrew לרבות (*le-rabbot*), "to increase"—that is, to include, amplify, or widen the scope of meaning.

469. **as long as *Shekhinah* was concealed in Her site fittingly** In the Temple, waiting for Her Husband, *Tif'eret*. See above, page 39; *Zohar* 2:170b–171a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimtnon*, 359.

The word כי (*ki*), *surely*, alludes to *Shekhinah* since its two letters form the initials of Her name כנסת ישראל (*Keneset Yisra'el*), "Assembly of Israel."

470. ***Around your table*—eating, drinking, bringing offerings...** The altar in the Temple serves as God's table.

471. **Through them, those above and below are blessed** Israel's worship ensures the flow of blessing through all the worlds.

472. **Israel were banished from their father's table** See BT *Berakhot* 3a: "Woe to the children banished from their father's table!"

473. **holy ones of the Most High** The phrase derives from Daniel 7:18, where it refers to Israel.

474. **punishment of Torah** The punishment for abandoning and violating Torah.

475. **when the priests brought sacrifices and burnt offerings; this is *in joy*** See *Zohar* 3:8a, 39a; Rashi on BT *Yoma* 14a, s.v. *mi la mitterid*; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 105, n. 3.

476. ***And gladness of heart*—the Levites** Who sang joyously in the Temple. See BT *Arakhin* 11a; *Zohar* 3:8a.

477. ***For the abundance of everything*—Israel, in between them...** Israel symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who mediates between—and draws from—the *sefirot* of *Ḥesed* (on the right)

and of *Gevurah* (on the left), symbolized respectively by priests and Levites.

478. ***You have magnified the nation*—Israel, over whom hovers the faith…** Israel's grandeur is attested by the protection of *Shekhinah*, the realm of faith. See *Zohar* 1:236b.

479. **rung of the supernal head, to which Abraham cleaved…** *Ḥesed* ("Love"), first of the seven lower *sefirot*, also known as *Gedullah* ("Greatness"). Through discovering God and expressing love, Abraham attained this rung.

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a; 97b (*ST*); 2:36a; 3:14a.

480. **when they ascend to cleave to You** Ascending to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festivals.

481. ***As in joy at the harvest*—Assembly of Israel…** The harvest festival of *Shavu'ot* commemorates the Revelation at Mount Sinai, when כנסת ישראל (*Keneset Yisra'el*), "the Assembly of Israel," was wedded to God. In the *Zohar, Keneset Yisra'el* can refer to the earthly community of Israel but also (often primarily) to *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine counterpart of the people, the aspect of God most intimately connected with them. On this harvest festival, She unites with Her partner, *Tif'eret*, the blessed Holy One. See *Zohar* 3:96b–98b.

482. **other powers and chariots below, dividing plunder…** The heavenly powers appointed over the nations of the world. On the seven days of the festival of *Sukkot*, they feed on seventy bullocks offered by Israel; then on the eighth day Israel rejoices alone with God.

See Numbers 29:12–34; BT *Sukkah* 55b; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:23; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 28:9; *Zohar* 1:64a–b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1251–53.

483. ***Time to act for* YHVH…This has been established** See *Sifrei Zuta* 27:1; BT *Berakhot* 54a, 63a;

Midrash Mishlei 5:16; *Midrash Tehillim* 119:57; *Zohar* 3:128a (*IR*).

484. ***time* is Assembly of Israel** *Shekhinah* is constantly changing, influenced by various forces at various times. See *Zohar* 1:194a; 2:155b.

485. **What does this mean:… *at just any time?… from a strange woman*** The shadow side of the divine feminine, *Shekhinah*, is the demonic feminine, the *strange woman*. If the priest enters the Sanctuary improperly, he empowers this evil power.

486. **corresponding to: *They offered strange fire in the presence of YHVH*** Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, were killed when *they offered strange fire in the presence of YHVH* (Leviticus 10:1–2). According to the *Zohar*, the *strange fire* symbolizes the demonic feminine. See *Zohar* 1:73b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 37 (44).

487. **drawing near, being illumined, uniting fittingly** The various stages in the union of *Shekhinah* and *Tif'eret*.

488. ***As for me, may my prayer come to You, O YHVH, at a time of favor*** The verse describes the approach of *Shekhinah*, known as *prayer*, to *Tif'eret*, known as *YHVH*.

489. **ויעש דוד (*Va-ya'as David*), *David made, a name…*** To Rabbi Yehudah, the verse implies that King David enhanced *Shekhinah*, the divine name, actualizing Her. Similarly, one who studies Torah arrays *Shekhinah*, "making" Her ready to unite with *YHVH*, the blessed Holy One. See *Zohar* 1:142b; 3:113a–b.

490. **there would never have been separation from the blessed Holy One** Both Israel and their divine counterpart, *Shekhinah*, would have always been united with the blessed Holy One.

491. ***I, YHVH, will hasten it…*** Hasten the redemption.

492. **What is בעתה (*be-ittah*)*?* בעת ה (*Be-et he*)…** *Shekhinah* is symbolized by the final letter of the name יהוה (*YHVH*).

493. **Assembly of Israel lies in the dust for one day, no more!** The exile will last for a thousand years, comprising one divine day. See Psalms 90:4: *For a thousand years in Your eyes are like yesterday that has passed*.

See *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:40; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 4; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* (Friedlander) 28, (Higger) 27; *Zohar* 2:17a, 227b; 3:270a; *ZḤ* 28c (*MhN*).

494. **ה (*he*) separating from ו (*vav*)** The last two letters of the name יהוה (*YHVH*) symbolize *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, whose union is ruined by the destruction of the Temple ("Her realm") and the ensuing exile. See *Zohar* 2:9b.

495. **because *vav* departed from *he* and voice disappeared...** The rupture of the divine couple separated the voice (*Tif'eret*) from speech (*Shekhinah*).

496. **that entire day of he. What is that? Fifth millennium** The exile of *Shekhinah* extends throughout the fifth millennium, symbolized by Her letter, ה (*he*), whose numerical value is five.

According to traditional Jewish chronology, the world was created less than 6000 years ago, at a date ostensibly corresponding to 3761 B.C.E. The fifth millennium corresponds to 240/41 C.E.–1239/40 C.E.

497. **although She went into exile before the beginning of the fifth millennium** The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 C.E., 170 years before the beginning of the fifth millennium; so Her exile, extending throughout the fifth millennium, lasts more than a thousand years.

498. **When the sixth millennium arrives—mystery of *vav*** The sixth millennium, symbolized by the letter ו (*vav*), whose numerical value is six, begins in the year 1240/41 C.E. See below, page 188; *Zohar* 2:9b-10a; *ZḤ* 56b-c.

499. ***vav* will raise *he* at six times ten** *Tif'eret* will raise *Shekhinah* from the dust of exile in the sixtieth year of the sixth millennium, i.e., in 1299/1300 C.E. This prediction of

the beginning of redemption points to a date soon after the appearance of the *Zohar*.

500. **ascending to ten, descending to five…** *Tif'eret*, symbolized by *vav*, equivalent to six, ascends to *Ḥokhmah*, symbolized by the י (*yod*) of יהוה (*YHVH*), equivalent to ten. Empowered by this ascent, He then descends to *Shekhinah*, symbolized by *he*, equivalent to five, and raises Her.

501. **In the six hundredth year of the sixth** Corresponding to 1839/40 C.E.

502. **to enter the seventh… to enter Sabbath** The seventh millennium, the cosmic Sabbath, beginning in 2240/41 C.E. In M *Tamid* 7:4, the Messianic era is described as "the day that is entirely Sabbath."

503. **one day of exile for Assembly of Israel, no more…** See above, note 493.

504. **duration of the world and the days of Creation…** As the six days of Creation were followed by Sabbath, so the world will exist for six thousand years followed by a millennial Sabbath. See BT *Sanhedrin* 97a: "Rabbi Katina said, 'The word will exist for six thousand years and for one thousand lie desolate.'"

505. **Then the rainbow will appear… in radiant colors, like a woman…** The rainbow symbolizes *Shekhinah*, adorned in sefirotic colors for Her husband, *Tif'eret*. See *Zohar* 1:1b, 72b.

506. ***I will see her, to remember the everlasting covenant…*** God's promise to Noah after the Flood: *When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it* [or: *her*], *to remember the everlasting covenant*.

507. **Who is *everlasting covenant*? Assembly of Israel** *Shekhinah* shares the designation *covenant* with *Yesod*.

508. ***Vav* will join *he*** *Tif'eret* will join *Shekhinah*.

509. **Reubenites will instigate wars throughout the world** See *Zohar* 1:235b–236a.

510. **for a count of *vav*, six times ten, ten years** For the first sixty years of the sixth millennium.

511. ***The Book of Rav Yeiva Sava*** One of many volumes housed in the real or imaginary library of the author(s) of the *Zohar*. It is cited frequently (1:47b, 79b; 2:6a, 60b, 206b; 3:7b, 155b, 289a, 290a, 295a [*IZ*]). See Matt, *Zohar*, 25; and the comment by Shim'on Lavi, *KP*, 1:12d: "All such books mentioned in the *Zohar*… have been lost in the wanderings of exile….Nothing is left of them except what is mentioned in the *Zohar.*"

512. ***Then the land will desire*** The verse reads: *Then the land will desire* [or: atone for, make up for, accept] *its Sabbaths. The land* symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

513. **mystery of *vav*, as is written… *with* יעקוב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob*…** In the entire Torah, only here is the name יעקוב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob*, spelled with a ו (*vav*), alluding to the messianic calculation noted above, page 180, and to *Tif'eret*, partner of *Shekhinah*. *Vav* is numerically equivalent to six, and *Tif'eret* includes within Himself all six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*, "all as one."

See Rashi and *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.; below, page 188; *Zohar* 2:9b-10a; 3:66b.

514. **the land will be desirable to the blessed Holy One** *Shekhinah*, symbolized by *the land*, will be desirable to Her partner, *Tif'eret*.

515. **day of which the Companions have spoken** The thousand-year-long day of exile. See above, note 493.

516. **all discovered in the mystery of letters of the Holy Name** As noted above, pages 179–81.

517. **Rav Yeiva Sava revealed the exile through those letters** Through the unique spelling of יעקוב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob*.

518. **through these letters it is revealed** Through the letters of the name יהוה (*YHVH*).

519. **He said to him** Rabbi Yehudah said to Rabbi Yose.

520. **by this rung** By *Shekhinah*. See above, p. 174 and n. 454.

521. **only through the mystery of *vav*…** Through the power of *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the *vav*, attached here to the name יהוה (*YHVH*).

522. **embracing all, revealing all** *Tif'eret*, situated at the center of the *sefirot*, transmits the entire flow of emanation.

523. **whatever is concealed reveals everything concealed…** *Tif'eret* is more concealed than *Shekhinah* and better suited to disclose what is hidden.

524. **the blessed Holy One makes everything depend upon returning…** Turning back to God. See BT *Sanhedrin* 98a: "Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi pointed out a contradiction. It is written: *in its time;* yet it is written: *I will hasten it*. If they prove worthy, *I will hasten it;* if not, *in its time*."

525. **When shafts of fire strike the white of your hands** "Shafts" renders קולפין (*qulpin*), "poles, lances." "White of" renders טהירי (*tehirei*), whose root means "bright"; here the word apparently refers to the palms.

526. **entered a cave… found a book…** The motif recurs in *Zohar* 2:13a–b; *ZḤ* 53c–d. According to legend, the *Zohar* itself was composed or hidden in a cave. See *OḤ*, intro; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:13, 19; Huss, "Hofa'ato shel Sefer ha-Zohar," 528.

According to rabbinic tradition, Rabbi Shim'on and his son, Rabbi El'azar, hid from the Roman authorities in a cave for thirteen years. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 79:6; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 10:9; BT *Shabbat* 33b; JT *Shevi'it* 9:1, 38d; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 11:16; *Midrash Tehillim* 17:13; *Zohar* 1:11a–b, 216b; *ZḤ* 59c–60a.

527. **seventy-two engravings of letters originally transmitted…** According to various medieval traditions, the angel Raziel transmitted a magical book to Adam. This book included "seventy-two species of wisdom" (*Zohar* 1:55b), corresponding to a complex divine name derived from the description of the splitting of the Red Sea: Exodus

14:19–21. Each of these three verses contains seventy-two letters. The name is composed of seventy-two triads, according to the following pattern: the first letter of the first verse, the last letter of the second verse, the first letter of the third verse (forming the first triad); the second letter of the first verse, the penultimate letter of the second verse, the second letter of the third verse (the second triad); etc.

On the seventy-two-letter name, see *Leqaḥ Tov*, Exodus 14:21; *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:19; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:2; Hai Gaon, *Otsar ha-Ge'onim, Ḥagigah*, 23; Rashi on BT *Sukkah* 45a, s.v. *ani*; Ibn Ezra on Exodus 14:19; *Bahir* 79 (110); *Zohar* 1:7b, 17a; 2:51b, 132b, 270a; 3:150b–151a; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 95–97; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, 14:67, 284–86. (The work known as *Sefer Razi'el*—the Book of Raziel, comprising ancient magical, mystical, and cosmological teachings—was probably compiled in its present form in the seventeenth century.)

528. **through which he discovered** Through which Adam discovered.

529. **all those behind the millstones...** Demonic forces. The phrase derives from Exodus 11:5: *the slave girl who is behind the millstones*. See *Zohar* 1:48a, 177a, 223b; 2:28a, 37b, 80a, 191b; and the description of the heavenly curtain in 2:259a (*Heikh*).

"Dazzling demons" renders טהירין (*tehirin*), from the Aramaic root meaning "brightness, noon." One class of demons is named טהרי (*tiharei*), "noonday demons." See Psalms 91:6 and Rashi, ad loc; *Targum*, Song of Songs 4:6; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 6:24, Deuteronomy 32:24. The Hebrew root טהר (*thr*), "pure," lends this demonic name a euphemistic tone.

530. **when a cloud will arise in the West, darkening the world** Apparently alluding to war.

531. **sides** Pages.

532. ***Abram journeyed… toward the Negev…*** **toward the South…** The Negev is the southern region of Canaan and, by extension, *negev* also means "south" in biblical Hebrew. Here it is identified with the warmth of *Ḥesed* ("Love"). Through discovering God and expressing love, Abraham attained this rung.

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*), 98a, 111a–b; 2:36a; 3:14a.

533. **he did not attain his realm fittingly until Isaac was born** Abraham could not fully attain *Ḥesed* until the birth of Isaac, who symbolized the polar opposite, *Gevurah*.

534. **joining with him, and they were linked with one another** Each balancing and fulfilling the other.

535. **he—no one else—named him Isaac, so that water would merge with fire** So *Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham and water, would merge with *Gevurah*, symbolized by Isaac and fire. See *Zohar* 1:103b–104a, 119b, 133b.

536. **Why *who was born to him?*** The phrase seems superfluous.

537. **Fire from water** The phrase derives from *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:12. See above, page 159.

538. מצחק **(*metsaḥeq*), *playing*** The ambiguity of the word invites interpretation, as we soon see.

539. **he did not attain a name** From the time Isaac's birth is predicted (Genesis 18) until after the death of Abraham (Genesis 25:9), Ishmael is not mentioned by name but is referred to simply as: *son of the maidservant, son of Hagar, his son, boy, lad* (Genesis 21:9–20). See Naḥmanides on Genesis 21:9.

540. **scoria** סספיתא (*Suspita*), "Dross, slag, scoria," a neologism apparently based on כוספא (*kuspa*), "pomace, husk, residue." Gold symbolizes Isaac and his corresponding *sefirah, Gevurah*, while the dross symbolizes Ishmael and the

forces of evil left over after the refining process of emanation.

See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 104: "A king does not want to mention dross where silver is found." See *Zohar* 1:30a, 71b, 228a; 2:24b, 203a, 224b, 236b; Moses de León, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 384; *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 182; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 389, n. 54; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 336–38.

On the unfit nature of Ishmael, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 31; *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:11; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:5; BT *Pesaḥim* 56a.

541. **in praise of Sarah... מצחק (*metsaḥeq*), reveling, in idolatry** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 53:11: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai said, 'Rabbi Akiva used to interpret this to [Ishmael's] shame, but I interpret it praiseworthily.... Rabbi Yishma'el [in parallel sources: Rabbi Akiva] taught, "This expression of צחוק (*tsehoq*), 'playing, revelry,' refers solely to idolatry, as is said [in the account of the Golden Calf]: *They rose to revel* (Exodus 32:6). This teaches that Sarah saw Ishmael building idolatrous altars, catching locusts, and sacrificing them."'"

See Theodor's note, ad loc.; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 31; *Tosefta, Sotah* 6:6; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:1; *ZḤ* 20a (*MhN*).

542. **Israel arose in the will... before the world was created** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1: "Six things preceded the creation of the world. Some of them were created and some of them arose in thought to be created.... Israel arose in thought."

543. **Therefore Abraham issued into the world** To engender Israel.

544. **world was sustained for his sake** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9, on Genesis 2:4: *These are the generations of heaven and earth* בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*. According to Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah, בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*, is an

anagram of באברהם (*be-Avraham*), "through Abraham," indicating that the world was created for his sake.

See *Zohar* 1:3b, 86b, 91b, 93a, 105b, 128b, 154b, 230b; 3:117a.

545. **Abraham and Isaac arose but did not settle… until Jacob issued…** Abraham and Isaac symbolize the polar opposite *sefirot Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, neither of which is completely stable without the mediating influence of *Tif'eret*, symbolized by Jacob.

546. ותתע **(*va-teta*), *and strayed*…** תעתועים **(*ta'tu'im*), *delusion*** Since the latter refers to idolatry, Rabbi Shim'on reasons that the former does too. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 30; Rashi on Genesis 21:14.

547. **the blessed Holy One did not abandon them…** Hagar and Ishmael. See Genesis 21:17–19.

548. ***God has seen your suffering*** The verse actually reads: *YHVH has heard your suffering*. Several witnesses read similarly.

549. ***God has heard the voice of the boy*—and not:…*your voice*** Having committed idolatry, she no longer deserved God's attentiveness.

550. ***There where he is*** The verse reads: *For God has heard the voice of the boy there where he is*.

551. **Lower Court… Higher Court…** See *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 24:16: "The Higher Court punishes only from twenty years and higher, while the Lower Court from thirteen years and one day."

See Numbers 14:29 (where the Israelites over twenty years old are condemned to die in the desert); M *Niddah* 5:6; BT *Shabbat* 89b; *Tanḥuma, Qoraḥ* 3; *Bahir* 135 (195); *Zohar* 2:113a–b, 186b, 248b (*Heikh*); 3:293b (*IZ*); *ZḤ* 20a (*MhN*).

According to rabbinic tradition, Ishmael was a teenager at this time. See *Tanḥuma, Shemot 1; Shemot Rabbah* 1:1; *Bereshit Rabbah* 53:13 (and Theodor's note); Naḥmanides on Genesis 21:9; Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 21:18.

552. **corresponding to what is written: *there where he is*** Under the age of twenty. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 53:14; BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b.

553. **from where does his punishment derive?** What causes his death, if the heavenly court imposes punishment only from the age of twenty?

554. **if he is less than thirteen, he is culpable for the sins of his father** Though not culpable for his own sins, he can be punished for his father's sins. See *Rut Zuta* 1:5: "Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Abba said, 'Until the age of thirteen, a son is punished for his father's sins; from then on, each person dies for his own sin.'" See Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6.

555. **if he is older than thirteen** And still less than twenty.

556. **that he may die innocent and be well rewarded in that world…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 25:1; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 7:23; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 6:2; BT *Ḥagigah* 5a.

557. **What if he is guilty and has not yet reached the age of twenty?…** Since the heavenly court has no jurisdiction over him, who brought about his death?

558. ***Some are swept away without judgment*** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:8; BT *Ḥagigah* 4b–5a; above, page 169; *Zohar* 2:196a, 249a (*Heikh*); 3:54b, 59b, 283b, 291b (*IZ*); *ZḤ* 77c (*MhN, Rut*).

559. **he encounters that Destroyer—unintentionally, above or below…** The teenage sinner encounters the Destroyer, without heavenly or earthly judicial procedure.

See BT *Bava Qamma* 60a–b: "Rabbi Yosef taught: 'What is the meaning of the verse *None of you shall go out the door of his house until morning* (Exodus 12:22)? Once permission has been granted to the Destroyer, he does not distinguish between righteous and wicked.'"

See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 11; *Zohar* 1:63a, 68a–b, 69a, 102a, 107b, 113a, 182b, 197b, 204b; 2:36a (*MhN*), 196a, 227a; 3:54a–b. Cf. 2:264b (*Heikh*).

560. **את (*Et*), amplifying the meaning** Grammatically, the accusative particle את (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when et appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:90a, 135b.

561. ***God has heard the voice of the boy there where he is*** In his present youthful state.

562. **יעקוב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob*—spelled with a ו (*vav*)** In the entire Torah, only here is the name יעקוב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob*, spelled with a ו (*vav*).

See Rashi and *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.; above, page 181; *Zohar* 2:9b-10a; 3:66b.

563. **mystery of a rung of wisdom, realm of Jacob** The letter vav symbolizes *Tif'eret*, attained by Jacob. *Vav* is numerically equivalent to six, and *Tif'eret* includes within Himself all six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*.

564. **by Jacob, in the mystery of *vav*, namely, the sixth millennium** Redemption will arrive in the sixth millennium, as indicated by the *vav*, symbolizing Jacob. The sixth millennium begins in the year 1240/41 C.E. See above, page 180; *Zohar* 2:9b-10a; *ZḤ* 56b-c.

565. **six moments and half a time** This is clarified below. See Daniel 7:25: *They will be delivered into his hand for a time, times, and half a time*. In this verse עדן (*iddan*), *time*, is often interpreted as "year."

566. **threshold...** עבורא דדשא (*Ibbura de-dashsha*), "Door-bolt," inserted into sockets in the threshold. See BT *Eruvin* 102a.

Sixty years into the sixth millennium refers to the year 1299/1300 C.E., a date soon after the appearance of the *Zohar*.

567. **six and a half years** The "six moments and half a time" mentioned above. See *Zohar* 3:270a.

568. **totaling seventy-three** Corresponding to 1312/13 C.E.

569. **In sixty-six** Corresponding to 1305/6 C.E. See *Zohar* 2:9b.

570. **King Messiah will appear in the land of Galilee** See *Leqaḥ Tov*, Numbers 24:17; *Aggadat Mashiaḥ*, in *Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:141; *Zohar* 2:7b, 8b–9a, 220a.

571. **One star in the East will swallow seven stars in the North** The star in the East symbolizes the Messiah, who derives from *Tif'eret*, identified with the East. See Numbers 24:17; *Targum Onqelos* and Naḥmanides, ad loc.; JT *Ta'anit* 4:5, 68d; *Devarim Rabbah* 1:20; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Devarim*, add. 6.

The stars in the North symbolize foreign forces deriving from the left side, identified with the North. See Jeremiah 1:14.

572. **souls will be depleted from the body** See BT *Yevamot* 62a: "Rabbi Assi said, 'The Son of David will not come until all souls in the body have been depleted.'" "The body" is the heavenly treasure house of unborn souls.

See Rashi, ad loc., and on BT *Avodah Zarah* 5a; *Bahir* 126 (184); *Zohar* 1:28b (*TZ*); 2:142a, 157a, 161b, 174a, 253a (*Heikh*); 3:152a; *ZḤ* 10b–c (*MhN*).

573. ***All the souls of the house of Jacob… numbered sixty-six*** Alluding to the sixty-sixth year of the sixth millennium, by which the souls of the heavenly treasure house will be depleted.

The citation here conflates two verses. See *Zohar* 2:9b; 3:252a (*RM*).

574. **In seventy-three** Corresponding to 1312/13 C.E.

575. **the blessed Holy One will pelt them with fire and hailstones** See Ezekiel's description of God's attack against Gog (38:22): *I will execute judgment against him with pestilence and blood; I will pour down torrential rain*

and hailstones, fire and brimstone upon him and his hordes and the many nations with him.

576. **until the years total one hundred** Until the hundredth year of the sixth millennium, corresponding to 1339/40 C.E.

577. ו **(*vav*) will join** ה **(*he*)** *Tif'eret* will join *Shekhinah*. See above, page 181.

578. ***they will bring all your brothers …as an offering to YHVH…*** The other nations will gather the dispersed of Israel and bring them as an offering to God in Jerusalem.

579. **The Ishmaelites are destined… to incite…** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* (Friedlander) 30, (Higger) 29; *Zohar* 2:32a; *ZḤ* 56b (*MhN*).

580. **small *vav*…** While *Tif'eret* is symbolized by a large ו (*vav*), *Yesod*, emerging from Him, is symbolized by a small ו (*vav*). Together the two letters spell וו (*vav*). *Yesod*, the divine phallus, unites with *Shekhinah*, engendering new souls or, as here, renewing ancient souls that had issued previously from the heavenly treasure house and reincarnating them in new bodies.

See *Zohar* 1:18a; 2:9b; 3:11a, 53b, 74b.

581. ***May the glory of YHVH endure forever—*** **uniting fittingly** Referring to the union of the divine couple.

582. ***May YHVH rejoice in His works*—bringing them down to the world** Human souls are God's *works*, engendered by the divine union.

See *Bahir* 14 (22); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489, 504; *Zohar* 1:15b, 19a, 33a, 59b–60a, 82b, 85b; 2:223b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 51; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69). Cf. Ibn Ezra on Psalms 1:3.

The verse from Psalm 104 is cited in an eschatological context in *Tanḥuma, Aḥarei Mot* 2; *Zohar* 2:259a (*Heikh*).

583. **enter the Sabbath** The cosmic Sabbath of Messianic time, "the day that is entirely Sabbath" (M *Tamid*

7:4). See above, page 180.

584. **one day for the blessed Holy One alone** See Zechariah 14:7: *There will be one day that will be known as YHVH's*.

585. **to couple fittingly** With *Shekhinah*.

586. ***all who are inscribed for life in Jerusalem*** Together with *all who are inscribed for life*, namely, new souls.

587. **totality of all rungs as one, with one another** אתה (*Attah*), *You*, refers to *Tif'eret*, who can be addressed directly in the second person, together with the *sefirot* surrounding Him (from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*). The third-person pronoun הוא (*Hu*), *He* (here translated as *are*), refers to the hidden upper triad of *sefirot: Keter, Ḥokhmah*, and *Binah*. מלכי (*Malki*), *My King*, refers to *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"). So the phrase encompasses all ten *sefirot*.

588. ***Command salvation for Jacob*—may all messengers** The plural "messengers" reflects the plural noun in the verse: ישועות (*yeshu'ot*), "deliverances, salvations."

589. **from the side of compassion, not from the side of judgment** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, also known as *Raḥamim* ("Compassion").

590. **Those coming from the side of compassion never perform…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:2: "One angel does not perform two missions, nor do two angels perform one mission."

591. **Look at the angel who appeared to Balaam!…** See Numbers 22:21–35 and *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:13: "He was an angel of compassion, but to him [Balaam] he became an adversary." See *Zohar* 3:207b.

592. **messenger of compassion…, while toward him…** Toward Balaam. The angel's nature did not change; rather, his compassion toward Israel entailed judgment toward Balaam.

593. ***Command salvation for Jacob*, for they are in exile** The people Israel, descended from Jacob, lie in exile,

awaiting redemption.

594. **Jacob was Glory of the Patriarchs** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:1: “Rabbi Pinḥas said in the name of Rabbi Re’uven, ‘… The chosen of the patriarchs is Jacob, as is said: *For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself* (Psalms 135:4).’”

In the *Zohar*, Jacob symbolizes *Tif’eret*, who harmonizes and completes the polar opposites *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, symbolized by Abraham and Isaac.

See *Zohar* 1:133a, 144b, 150a, 152a (*ST*), 163b, 171b, 172b, 173b, 180a, 207a; 2:23a.

595. **the expression *It came to pass in the days of* denotes sorrow**… ויהי (*Vayhi*), *It came to pass*, is read as היה וי (*vai hayah*), “there was woe,” or וי הי (*vai, hi*), “woe, wailing.”

See BT *Megillah* 10b: “Rabbi Levi, or some say Rabbi Yonatan, said, ‘This matter is a tradition handed down to us from the Men of the Great Assembly: Wherever it is said: ויהי (*Vayhi*), *It came to pass*, this denotes sorrow.’ … Rav Ashi said, ‘ויהי (*Vayhi*), *It came to pass*, sometimes denotes this and sometimes not, while ויהי בימי (*Vayhi biymei*), *It came to pass in the days of*, always denotes sorrow.’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 41(42):3 (on Genesis 14:1): “Rabbi Tanḥuma said in the name of Rabbi Ḥiyya the Elder and Rabbi Berekhiah said in the name of Rabbi El’azar, ‘This interpretation came to us from the Exile [Babylon]: Wherever it is written: ויהי בימי (*Vayhi biymei*), *It came to pass in the days of*, this denotes distress.’… Rabbi Shim’on said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, ‘Wherever it is written: ויהי (*Vayhi*), *It came to pass*, this denotes either distress or joy. If distress, there is none like it; if joy, there is none like it.’”

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 11:7; BT *Megillah* 11a; *Zohar* 1:16b; 2:140b, 167a; 3:231a; *ZḤ* 77a (*MhN, Rut*).

The phrase “tinged with” renders טיפסי (*tifsei*), based on טופסא (*tufsa*), “frame, mold, form, configuration, pattern.” See *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 179–80.

596. **lowest of all upper rungs… *Devarim Shekhinah***, last of the ten *sefirot*, is called *Davar*, “word” of God, since She

conveys the divine essence. Davar means both “word” and “thing.” Here the plural, *devarim*, is cited from the verse in Genesis and applied to *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:1b; 3:191a, 193b.

597. ***I am not a man of devarim, words*** At the beginning of his career, Moses was *heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue* (Exodus 4:10), not yet filled with the divine word, not yet intimate with *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:192b; 2:25b.

598. ***Elohim tested Abraham*, for the evil impulse came to accuse…** In rabbinic literature the name *Elohim* refers to *Din*, the divine attribute of Justice, while *YHVH* refers to *Raḥamim*, the attribute of Compassion. See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 26; *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15; 33:3.

In the *Zohar* the name *Elohim* has a wide range of meaning. Sometimes it refers to the *sefirah* of *Din* (“Judgment”); sometimes to *Binah*, the Divine Mother, situated above *Din*; sometimes to *Shekhinah*, since She leans toward the left, *Din*. This multivalent name can also refer to various powers originating in *Din*. See *Zohar* 1:111b; 2:96a; 3:8a, 113a, 200a.

Here *Elohim* alludes to *Din* and to the evil impulse, a harsh manifestation of *Din* who appears outside the divine realm, *after… devarim*, the rung of *Shekhinah*. See BT *Sanhedrin* 89b: “*It came to pass after these devarim, things, that God tested Abraham*…. Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Zimra, ‘After the *devarim*, words, of Satan…. Satan said in the presence of the blessed Holy One, “Master of the universe! You bestowed upon this old man the fruit of the womb at the age of one hundred! From his entire feast could he not offer a single dove or pigeon to You?” He replied, “… If I tell him, ‘Sacrifice your son before Me,’ he will do so immediately.” Immediately, *God tested Abraham. He said, ‘Take your son.’*” See *Zohar* 1:11a.

In this passage Rabbi Shim’on suggests paradoxically that the evil impulse is working for *Elohim*. His accusation is

actually part of the divine plan, a mystical and psychological challenge to Abraham.

599. **Isaac was already thirty-seven years old** See *Seder Olam Rabbah* 1; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 24; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 23; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 2; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 31; Theodor's note on *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:4, 587–88; above, page 130; *Zohar* 1:230b.

600. **he had to be encompassed by judgment …** Through discovering God and expressing love, Abraham had attained the rung of *Ḥesed* ("Love"), but he was devoid of its complementary opposite: *Din* ("Judgment"). Being too one-sided, he now had to balance love with rigor in order to round out his personality and become a complete human being in the image of God.

See *Zohar* 1:230b; 2:257a (*Heikh*); 3:18a; Moses de León, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 372. On Abraham and *Ḥesed*, see Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a; 97b (*ST*), 111a–b; 2:36a; 3:14a.

601. **water was embraced by fire** The free-flowing love of *Ḥesed* was encompassed by the fervid power of *Din*.

602. **to execute judgment, arraying it in its realm** By binding Isaac on the altar, Abraham manifested the quality of *Din* both on earth and in the sefirotic realm.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:1: "*It came to pass after these things that God* נסה (*nissah*), *tested, Abraham*. It is written: *You have given* נס (*nes*), *a banner, to those in awe of You*, להתנוסס (*le-hitnoses*), *to be unfurled*…. (Psalms 60:6)—trial upon trial, elevation above elevation, to test them in the world, to elevate them in the world like a ship's banner. Why to such an extent? *Because of truth. Selah* (ibid.)—so that מדת הדין (*middat ha-Din*), the attribute of Justice, would be verified in the world." As the midrash goes on to say, the case of Abraham proves that God does not reward or punish arbitrarily. The patriarch was rewarded for his extreme devotion in being willing to sacrifice his son.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:6; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 43; *Mekhilta, Baḥodesh* 9; *Zohar* 1:140a; 3:18a.

603. **water was completed by fire, fire by water** Father and son completed each other: Abraham by manifesting severe judgment, Isaac by submitting lovingly. Their interaction balanced the corresponding *sefirot* above. See *Zohar* 1:103b–104a, 118b, 133b, 164b.

604. **One was judged, one executed judgment** … Isaac submitted to Abraham, and together they enacted the sefirotic drama.

605. **Therefore the evil impulse came to accuse Abraham…** See above, note 598.

606. ***tested et Abraham*—*et* precisely!** Grammatically, the accusative particle את (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when et appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:90a, 135b.

In the *Zohar* the word את (*et*) symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who comprises the entire alphabet of divine speech, from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*). See the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: "I am *alpha* and *omega*."

607. **This is Isaac, for at that time he dwelled in low power** Isaac was destined to rise to the *sefirah* of high power (*Gevurah* ["Power"] or *Din*), but before he was bound on the altar he was unfulfilled, inhabiting the lower realm of *Shekhinah*, who derives from *Gevurah* and is indicated by *et*.

See *Bahir* 131 (190). On *Shekhinah* as "low power," see *Zohar* 3:11b.

608. **crowned in his realm alongside Abraham** Having undergone severe judgment, Isaac manifests *Din* alongside Abraham, who manifests *Ḥesed*. See *Zohar* 1:133b; 2:257a (*Heikh*).

609. **Then division became apparent: water versus fire** The two patriarchs and their respective *sefirot* have

completed one another, but they are not yet harmonized. Their dialectical relationship awaits synthesis.

610. **until Jacob appeared and everything harmonized…** Jacob, the third and decisive patriarch, symbolizes the *sefirah* of *Tif'eret*, who balances the polar qualities of *Ḥesed* and *Din*, symbolized by Abraham and Isaac.

611. ***He said, 'Take your son'*** The verse continues: '—*your only one, whom you love, Isaac—and go forth to the land of Moriah, and offer him up there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you of.*'

612. ***Take Aaron and his son Eleazar…* coax with words** See *Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ* 1; *Sifra, Tsav, millu'im* 1:2, 40d; *Sifrei*, Numbers 92, 141; *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:5; *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 10; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Qoraḥ* 2; Rashi on Genesis 2:15; *Zohar* 1:79a.

613. ***Your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac…*** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:7: "*Your son*. He asked, 'Which son?' He told him, *Your only one*. He replied, 'This is the *only one* of his mother, and that is the *only one* of his mother.' He said, *Whom you love*. He asked, 'Are there boundaries in the innards [the seat of emotions]?' He said, *Isaac*. Why did He did not reveal it [right away]? In order to make him [Isaac] even more beloved in his eyes and to reward him for every single word."

See BT *Sanhedrin* 89b; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 22.

614. ***to the land of Moriah… to the mountain of myrrh…*** The alliteration indicates that Moriah, site of the Temple, is the site of offering incense. See 2 Chronicles 3:1; *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:7.

Abraham and myrrh are linked in *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:6; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 2. In *Zohar* 3:3b (*RM*) myrrh is identified with *Ḥesed*, Abraham's sefirotic site.

615. ***On the third day.* They have already established this** In *Bereshit Rabbah* 56:1, various biblical parallels are cited.

616. **since it is said: *He rose and went to the place…*** Since apparently Abraham had already reached the site.

617. **why: *On the third day… he saw the place from afar*?** If Abraham had already arrived in the land of Moriah, how could he see it *from afar*?

618. **Jacob, who issued from him; this is *the third day*** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, third day of the cosmic week of Creation, the seven *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Shekhinah*.

619. ***He saw the place from afar*, as is said: *From afar, YHVH appeared…*** The phrase *from afar* implies prophetic vision. Furthermore, the verse in Jeremiah alludes to *Tif'eret*, known as *YHVH*, who emanated *from afar*, from the furthest realms. See Rashi on Jeremiah 31:2; *Zohar* 1:5b–6a.

620. ***He saw the place*—Jacob…*He took one of the stones of the place*** Since in the later narrative *the place* is associated with Jacob, so here too.

In rabbinic literature, המקום (*ha-maqom*), *the place*, is a name for God. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9: "Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Ammi, 'Why do we modify the name of the blessed Holy One, calling Him *Maqom*? Because He is the "place" of the world; His world is not His place [i.e., God contains the world; the world does not contain God].'" See Urbach, *The Sages*, 1:66–79.

621. **from him** From Isaac, or from Abraham through Isaac.

622. **What is so admirable about Abraham …** If Abraham foresaw that Jacob would issue through Isaac, then he must have realized that he would not have to really slaughter Isaac, so what is so great about the fact that he bound him on the altar?

623. **consummating** Completing the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

624. **now existing for him *from afar*…** Now Abraham did not focus on Jacob, since he was intent on carrying out

God's command to sacrifice Isaac and did not want to entertain suspicions about God's failure to fulfill His promise: *Through Isaac, seed will be named for you*.

625. **dim lens…** אספקלריא דלא נהרא (*Ispaqlarya de-la nahara*), "Speculum [or: glass, mirror, lens] that does not shine." See BT *Yevamot* 49b: "All the prophets gazed through a dim glass [literally: an *ispaqlarya* that does not shine], whereas Moses our teacher gazed through a clear glass [literally: an *ispaqlarya* that shines]." Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face-to-face."

In the *Zohar, Shekhinah* is the dim lens, the *ispaqlarya* that does not shine on its own but rather reflects the other *sefirot. Tif'eret* is the clear lens, the resplendent speculum, the *ispaqlarya* that shines. See *Zohar* 1:33b, 183a; 2:23b.

626. **Why did the clear lens retract…** Jacob, symbolizing *Tif'eret* (the clear lens), was not yet born, so his *sefirah* did not yet appear on the rung of *Shekhinah* (the dim lens).

627. **Further, so that he would go and be rewarded** Abraham did not see Jacob clearly so that he would proceed innocently with the binding of Isaac—and be rewarded for doing so.

628. **when Jacob arrived, Abraham had already died…** Actually, according to bib-heal genealogy Abraham was still alive when Jacob was born. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old; Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years old (Genesis 25:26), i.e., when Abraham was 160; and Abraham lived to the age of 175.

See *DE, Haggahot Maharḥu, Zohorei Ya'bets*, and *NZ* on this passage; *Zohar* 1:138b.

629. ***They came to the place… and Abraham built an altar there*** The verse continues: *and arranged the wood and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar on top of the wood*.

630. **Although they… saw Jacob… another appropriate way** Although they envisioned Jacob,

Abraham surmised that God planned some other way for him to issue into the world even after the slaughter of Isaac.

631. ***'My father!'*** **They have already established this** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 56:4: "*Isaac said to Abraham his father, 'My father!'* Why *his father, my father?* So he would be filled with compassion for him." See Theodor and Mirkin, ad loc.; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, Genesis 22:7, n. 88.

632. **why didn't he answer him at all?** Abraham's only response was: *Here I am, my son*. Why didn't he answer his son's implied plea?

633. ***'Here I am, my son'*** **... compassion ... transformed into judgment** Abraham, who normally symbolizes *Ḥesed*, declares that he has taken on the quality of *Din*, symbolized by Isaac, *my son*. See *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 24.

634. ***Abraham said*** The full verse reads: *Abraham said, 'God will provide Himself the sheep for a burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them walked on together*.

635. **now:** ***my son*****, not a sheep** The verse reads: *God will provide Himself the sheep for a burnt offering, my son*. Rabbi Shim'on, drawing on the Midrash, takes this to mean that Isaac, *my son*, is now the intended sacrifice.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 56:4: "'*God will provide Himself the sheep*... And if not, *the sheep for a burnt offering is my son!' The two of them walked on together*—one to slaughter, the other to be slaughtered."

See *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), ad loc.; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 40; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 31; Rashi and Radak, ad loc.; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, ad loc., n. 94.

636. ***Behold, the valiant*****—supernal angels.** ***Cried*** **at that moment** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 56:5: "Rabbi Ḥanina son of Yitsḥak said, '... As our Father Abraham stretched out his hand to take the knife to slaughter his son, the ministering angels wept, as is written: *Behold, the valiant cried outside....*'"

637. **seeking to comprehend the word that is written: *He took him outside*** The angels *cried outside* because they were shocked that God would allow Abraham to kill his beloved son. The word *outside* recalls the divine promise to Abraham: *He took him outside and said: 'Look now toward heaven and count the stars, if you can count them!' Then He said to him, 'So shall your seed be.'*

638. ***'Abraham! Abraham!'*—separated by a punctuation mark...** In the Masoretic text, the two occurrences of the name are separated by a vertical line. Rabbi Shim'on takes this to mean that now, having undergone this ordeal, Abraham was a new, fulfilled person. See above, pages 193–94; *Zohar* 3:138a (*IR*), 187b.

639. **Similarly, *Samuel! Samuel!*...** At his initiation.

640. **But *Moses! Moses!*—unseparated...** The two occurrences of his name are not separated by a line. See *Shemot Rabbah* 2:6: "But *Moses! Moses!*—there is no separation. Why?... With all the other prophets, He broke off speaking with them, while throughout Moses' life He never broke off."

See *Sifra, Vayiqra, dibbura dindavah* 1:12; BT *Sotah* 12a; *Zohar* 2:11b-12a, 19a (*MhN*); 3:106b, 138a (*IR*), 174a, 187b; *Minḥat Shai* on Exodus 3:4.

641. **To arouse him with another spirit...** Arousing his compassion. See *Zohar* 1:59b–60a (*Tos*).

642. **Isaac was sifted...** Although Isaac wasn't sacrificed, by being bound on the altar he was purified and accepted by God as if he had been offered up. See *Tanḥuma, Shelaḥ* 14; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 31.

643. ***Abraham raised his eyes and saw: here, a ram...*** The verse continues: *caught behind in the thicket by its horns*.

644. **created at twilight** See the list of supernatural phenomena in M *Avot* 5:6: "Ten things were created on Sabbath eve at twilight: ... Some say also... the ram of Abraham our Father."

645. **in its first year, as is said: *one lamb in its first year*...** The verse continues: *for a burnt offering*. The daily burnt offering in the Temple consisted of a lamb in its first year. Similarly, the ram substituted for Isaac was in its first year.

646. **You say it was created at twilight? But Isaac was not yet in the world!** How then could the ram be less than one year old? It must have been as old as the world!

647. **Rather, a force was ordained so that this sheep would appear...** The sheep (or ram) itself wasn't created in the Beginning but rather an energy (or potential) that eventually materialized when a substitute for Isaac was required. See *Zohar* 3:201b.

648. **לא (*lo*)—written with an א (*alef*) but read with a ו (*vav*)...** In the Masoretic text the word *lo* is written with an א (*alef*), meaning *not*, but is traditionally read with a ו (*vav*), yielding the opposite sense: *In all their affliction* לו צר (*lo tsar*), *He was afflicted*.

See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 14; BT *Sotah* 31a; *Tanḥuma, Vayishlaḥ* 10; *Shemot Rabbah* 2:2; *Zohar* 3:219b; Rashi, Radak, and *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.

649. **לא (*Lo*), with an א (*alef*), an extremely high realm...** Read this way, the word alludes to *Keter*, the primal and incomprehensible *sefirah*, known as אין (*ayin*), "nothingness," and לא (*lo*), "no, not." See David ben Judah he-Ḥasid, *Mar'ot ha-Ẓove'ot*, 259–61.

Alternatively, the word is read here as: לא׳ (*la-alef*), *to the alef*, also alluding to the primal *sefirah*, symbolized by the first letter of the alphabet.

650. **ולא (*ve-lo*)... written with an א (*alef*) but read with a ו (*vav*)** With an א (*alef*), the phrase means: *and not we ourselves*. With a ו (*vav*), it means: *and we are His*. See *Bahir* 96 (141), where the phrase is interpreted as: ולא׳ אנחנו (*ve-la-alef anaḥnu*), *and we belong to the alef*, to *Keter*, the One.

See Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, 105, n. 3; *Zohar* 3:183b.

651. **He shares in that affliction, so how can you say: *saved them*?** If God participates in their exile, He has not yet saved them.

652. **rather: *saved them*, already, for He is right there in that affliction…** By sharing their affliction, He has already guaranteed their salvation.

653. **Whenever Israel is in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanies them…** See BT *Megillah* 29a: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai says, 'Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them…. When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them…. And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them, as is said: ושב יהוה אלהיך (*Ve-shav YHVH Elohekha*), *YHVH your God will return*, (*with*) *your captivity*. The verse does not read והשיב (*ve-heshiv*), *will bring back*, but rather ושב (*ve-shav*), *will return*. This teaches that the blessed Holy One will return with them from amidst the exile.'" See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 14.

654. ***angel of His presence saved them—Shekhinah*** See *Zohar* 1:61a, 113a, 166a, 230a; 3:187a; *Mekhilta, Shirta* 3.

655. **how can you say that he *saved them*?** If the angel accompanies them in exile, he has not saved them.

656. **pledges of the blessed Holy One in exile…** *Shekhinah* and Her retinue of angels constitute the blessed Holy One's pledge deposited with Israel, guaranteeing that He will save them, redeeming Her along with them. The verse is understood to mean: Because *Shekhinah* (*the angel of His presence*) was deposited with them, the blessed Holy One *saved them*.

See *Zohar* 2:241a; 3:114a–b; *ZḤ* 65b (*ShS*).

657. ***I have remembered My covenant*, first** First, the blessed Holy One remembers *Shekhinah*, known as *My covenant*.

658. **and then: *Here, the cry of the Children of Israel has come to Me*** Actually, this verse precedes the other.

659. ***And I have also seen*** The verse continues: *how the Egyptians are oppressing them*.

660. **amplifying the meaning to include...** לאסגאה (*Le-asga'ah*), "To increase," a Zoharic rendering of the rabbinic Hebrew לרבות (*le-rabbot*), "to increase"—that is, to include, amplify, or widen the scope of meaning. In rabbinic hermeneutics the word גם (*gam*), "also, too," amplifies the literal meaning of a biblical word or phrase. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:14; JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14b.

661. **another, first of all...** Another vision, foremost: the suffering of *Shekhinah*. The prooftext here (*God remembered His covenant*...) precedes both other verses.

662. ***With Abraham*** The verse reads: *God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*.

663. **The verse should read: לאברהם (*le-Avraham*), *with Abraham*** The biblical word ברית (*berit*), *covenant*, is often followed by the preposition ל (*le*), rather than את (*et*), both of which can mean *with*. See Exodus 34:12; Deuteronomy 7:2; 1 Samuel 11:1; Isaiah 55:3.

664. **But את אברהם (*et Avraham*) implies Her union...** Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when et appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:90a, 135b.

In the *Zohar* the word את (*et*) symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who comprises the entire alphabet of divine speech, from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*). See the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: "I am *alpha* and *omega*."

Here Rabbi Yehudah interprets the triple occurrence of et as implying the union of *Shekhinah* with each of the patriarchs.

665. ***Et Avraham*—Southwest** South symbolizes *Ḥesed*, Abraham's *sefirah*, while West symbolizes *Shekhinah*. See BT *Bava Batra* 25a: "Rabbi Abbahu said, '*Shekhinah* is in the West.'"

666. **את יצחק (*et Yitsḥaq*), *with Isaac*—Northwest** North symbolizes *Gevurah*, Isaac's *sefirah*.

667. **ואת יעקב (*ve-et Ya'aqov*), *and with Jacob*—single coupling...** *Tif'eret*, Jacob's *sefirah*, who harmonizes the polar opposites (*Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*), attains complete union with *Shekhinah*.

668. **Similarly, את השמים ואת הארץ (*et ha-shamayim ve-et ha-arets*)...** The phrase את השמים (*et ha-shamayim*), *the heavens*, indicates the union of *Shekhinah* (symbolized by et and night) with *Tif'eret* (symbolized by *the heavens* and day). Likewise, the phrase ואת הארץ (*ve-et ha-arets*), *and the earth*, indicates the union of *Tif'eret* (symbolized by the letter ו [*vav*]) with *Shekhinah* (symbolized by *et* and *the earth*).

See BT *Berakhot* 11b, where Rava and Abbaye indicate that light is mentioned in the evening prayers and darkness in the morning prayers, "in order to mention the quality [מדה (*middah*), "quality, attribute"] of day during the night and the quality of night during the day."

See *Zohar* 1:12b, 259a (*Hash*); 2:162a; 3:260b, 264a.

669. ***He said, 'Surely they are My people...'...*** This verse precedes the one expounded above by Rabbi Yehudah: *In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them*.

1. **seeing that he fled so *Shekhinah* would not rest upon him** Knowing that *Shekhinah* reveals Herself only in the land of Israel, Jonah fled the Holy Land to escape the burden of revelation. Consequently, the land should have raged against him.

See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1: "Rabbi El'azar son of Tsadok said, '… *Shekhinah* is not revealed outside the land [of Israel], for it is said: *Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of YHVH* (Jonah 1:3). Was he fleeing *from the presence of YHVH*? Has it not already been said: *Where can I go from Your spirit?* [*Where can I flee from Your presence?*] *If I ascend to heaven, You are there*. [*If I make my bed in Sheol, here You are*]…(Psalms 139:7–8). Rather, Jonah said, "I will go outside the land, where *Shekhinah* is not revealed."'"

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 10; *Zohar* 1:85a; 2:170b.

2. **sea resembles the sky…** See *Sifrei*, Numbers 115: "Rabbi Me'ir says, '…Whoever fulfills the commandment of [wearing] the tassel [Numbers 15:38–40] is as though he greeted the face of *Shekhinah*, for the blue-violet [thread in the corner tassel of the garment] resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the sky, and the sky resembles the Throne of Glory.'" See BT *Sotah* 17a.

In Kabbalah both "sea" and Throne of Glory symbolize *Shekhinah*.

3. **From the sea he fled** Jonah fled from *Shekhinah*.

4. **They lifted him out** As the verse reads: *They picked Jonah up*.

5. **they seized him and plunged him… up to his thighs…** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 10: "He said to them, 'On my account has this misfortune befallen you. *Pick me up and throw me into the sea* [*and the sea will calm down for you*].' Immediately they seized him and plunged him in up to his knees, and the sea ceased its raging. They took him back up and the sea stormed against them. They plunged him in up to his navel and the sea ceased its raging. They raised him up and the sea stormed against them. They

plunged him in up to his neck and the sea ceased its raging. Again they raised him up and the sea stormed against them. They plunged him in completely and immediately the sea ceased its raging."

6. **he entered the mouth of that fish** See Jonah 2:1.

7. **The fish died and then came back to life…** See *Zohar* 2:48a, 199b.

8. **when a person climbs into bed, his soul leaves him…** See *Zohar* 1:92a; 3:67a, 121b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:809–12.

Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:9: "It was said in the name of Rabbi Me'ir: 'This soul fills the body, and when a person sleeps she ascends, drawing down life from above.'"

9. ***For God has heard the voice of the boy there where he is*** Regarding Ishmael, son of Abraham and Hagar. See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b: "Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'A person is judged only according to his actions up to that moment, as is said: *For God has heard the voice of the boy there where he is*.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 53:14; above, page 187.

10. **Rather, also for good deeds he will eventually perform,…** See *Zohar* 1:227a.

11. **judged in the presence of the blessed Holy One** Who knows the future and judges compassionately.

12. **Court of Justice** *Shekhinah*, who derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment, Justice") and administers it to the world.

13. **like a pregnant woman undergoing hard labor** See BT *Berakhot* 29b: "Rav Ḥisda said in the name of Mar Ukba, 'Even when You are filled with עברה (*evrah*), wrath, against them like אשה עוברה (*ishshah ubbarah*), a pregnant woman, may You be aware of all their needs.'"

14. **the blessed Holy One takes no pleasure** … See BT *Megillah* 10b: "Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'The blessed Holy One does not rejoice in the downfall of the wicked.'"

15. **here, before the pint is full; there, afterwards** Ezekiel refers to sinners who are not yet completely guilty, while Proverbs describes those who are. See BT *Sotah* 9a: “Rav Hamnuna said: ‘The blessed Holy One does not punish a person until his peck is full.’” Cf. *Zohar* 1:61b, 113b.

“Pint” renders קיסטא (*qista*), derived from the Greek *xestes*, a measure about the size of a pint. See *Zohar* 1:33a, 83a, 162a.

16. **to none of them is an entire portion devoted, as to Sarah** This Torah portion (Genesis 23:1–25:18) is entitled *Ḥayyei Sarah, Sarah’s Life*.

17. **rung upon which depend all human days and years** *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine, symbolized by the matriarch Sarah, conveys and regulates the gift of life. The significance of the numbers one hundred, twenty, and seven is clarified below, note 39. On the relation between *Shekhinah* and time, see *Zohar* 1:116b, 194a; 2:155b.

18. ***The abundance of the earth is in all*, indeed, since from there issue…** *All* designates *Yesod*, who transmits the entire flow of emanation to *Shekhinah*, symbolized by *the earth*, and—through Her—to the worlds below.

19. **Who is *a king*? The blessed Holy One** *Tif’eret*. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 22:2.

20. ***For a cultivated field*—when properly tilled** *Shekhinah*, when She is cultivated by righteous human action.

On cultivating the land as a metaphor for serving God and observing the commandments, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 41; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 2:15; *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:5; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 21; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 12; *Battei Midrashot*, 2:91; *Zohar* 1:27a (*TZ*), 57b, 84b, 141b, 199b; 2:165b.

21. ***A king*—Supernal King** *Tif’eret*.

22. **The field blessed by *YHVH*… *like the fragrance of a field*…** The field of *Shekhinah*, also known as the Holy

Apple Orchard.

See BT *Ta'anit* 29b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 11; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35–37; *Zohar* 1:36a, 85a–b, 128b, 142b, 143b, 224b, 249b; 2:60b, 61b; 3:74a, 84a, 133b (*IR*), 135b (*IR*), 286b–287a, 288a (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365.

23. ***A king—Shekhinah*** Though usually depicted as feminine, *Shekhinah* is sometimes called King, since She rules over the lower worlds. She is also known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom").

24. **with her** With his wife.

25. ***for a cultivated field*, for none other** Only for a woman sown by her husband. On woman as field, see *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 21; *Bereshit Rabbah* 22:7; 63:12; BT *Bava Batra* 16b; *Zohar* 1:35b, 36b, 54b; 3:202a–b.

26. **Alternatively, *A king*—a woman in awe of *YHVH*...** *Shekhinah,* the divine feminine, characterized by awe.

27. ***Le-sadeh ne'evad, Enslaved to a field*—a strange woman...** Now Rabbi El'azar interprets the phrase differently, applying it to the demonic feminine, Lilith. As a result of human sin, *Shekhinah* is *enslaved to* her, channeling the flow of emanation to the demonic.

28. **For there is a field, and then, there is a field!** A divine field and a demonic field. See Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Tsedeq*, 14a.

29. ***at a slave who becomes king, and a slave-girl supplanting*...** When **as** a **result** of human wickedness, the demonic displaces the divine.

30. **The light of this king is concealed—darkened—until he is purified...** *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the moon, is deprived of radiance from Her partner above, symbolized by the sun.

31. **Therefore, the goat of the new mooon...** According to Numbers 28:15, on each new moon a goat must be brought as a sin-offering. Here Rabbi El'azar

indicates that the goat is intended for the demonic field, deprived of divine blessing, so that the demonic won't interfere with the reunion of *Shekhinah* and *Tif'eret*. For an alternative interpretation, see *MM, MmD*.

See *Zohar* 1:64a, 65a, 138b; 2:33a, 185a, 238a, 269a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:890–95. On the connection between this offering and the diminution of the moon, see BT *Ḥullin* 60b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 6:3.

32. **When he is *enslaved to a field*** When *Shekhinah* is enslaved to the demonic.

33. ***For in the field he found her; the engaged girl screamed…*** The verse continues: *but there was no one to save her*.

34. ***For in the field*, as has been said** This *field* symbolizes the demonic realm, from which *Shekhinah*, engaged to *Tif'eret*, cries out to be rescued.

35. **Eve… clung to this serpent, who injected her with slime** See BT *Shabbat* 145b–146a: "Rav Yosef taught: '… When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), filth [or: slime, lewdness].'"

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 4:1 (variants); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 21; *Zohar* 1:36b–37a, 52a, 54a.

36. **Sarah came, descended, and ascended, not clinging to him…** Sarah and Abraham's descent into Egypt symbolizes their encounter with the demonic, from which they *went up*, emerging in peace. See *Zohar* 1:83a–b.

37. ***He drank of the wine and became drunk, and exposed himself*** The verse continues: *inside his tent*. Noah was seduced by demonic forces. See *Zohar* 1:73a–b.

38. ***Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the quarry…*** See the following verse: *Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you*.

39. **Her entire life was supernal… *One hundred… twenty… seven…*** Sarah's life was permeated with the divine, each number of years alluding to the sefirotic realm: *one hundred* to *Keter*, comprising ten aspects of each of the

ten *sefirot; twenty* to *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, comprising ten aspects each; *seven* to the seven lower *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Shekhinah*.

40. **Why the variation… שנה (*shanah*), *year*… שנים (*shanim*), *years*…?** Biblical syntax often employs the singular noun with numbers higher than ten. Rabbi Shim'on wonders why.

41. ***one hundred shanah, year*, is totality of all…** Alluding to *Keter*, encompassing all ten aspects of each of the ten *sefirot*. On this passage, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 108–10.

42. **in the mystery of one hundred daily blessings** See BT *Menaḥot* 43b: "Rabbi Me'ir used to say, 'A person must recite one hundred blessings every day, as is said: *Now, O Israel,* מה (*mah*), *what, does YHVH your God ask of you?* (Deuteronomy 10:12).'" The word מה (*mah*), *what*, is read as מאה (*me'ah*), *one hundred:* God requires one hundred blessings.

See *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *sho'el me-immakh; Minḥat Shai* on Deuteronomy, ibid.

43. **Similarly, *twenty shanah, year*** Alluding to *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, who encompass ten aspects each in a single totality. Their union is unbroken. See *Zohar* 1:95b, 153b; 2:11b; 3:4a, 78a.

44. **So it is written: *shanah, year*—mystery of singularity…** The singular form reflects the unified nature of these highest *sefirot*.

45. ***Seven years*—separating… into judgment and compassion…** Though the lower *sefirot* also participate in unity, they reflect various aspects of divine personality and are therefore described in the plural: *shanim, years*.

46. ***Sarah's life endured*—really endured, created, abiding above!** Her life was imbued with divine life.

47. **They have established this** The reason for the expression *Sarah's life endured*.

48. **when Isaac was bound he was thirty-seven years old** When he was bound on the altar. See *Seder Olam Rabbah* 1; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 24; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 23; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 2; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 31; Theodor's note on *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:4, 587–88; *Zohar* 1:103a, 119b, 230b.

49. **as soon as he was bound, Sarah died…** She died from anguish over her son's ordeal. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:5: "*Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her*. From where did he come?… Rabbi Yose said…, 'From Mount Moriah.'" See the parallels cited by Theodor, ad loc.

50. **Those thirty-seven years… were *Sarah's* true *life…*** Sarah was fulfilled by the first thirty-seven years of Isaac's life, as indicated by the opening word of the verse and of the Torah portion: ויהיו (*va-yihyu*), *it endured*, equivalent to thirty-seven.

See *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 23:1: "Why does the verse read: *Sarah's life endured*? This teaches that once Isaac was born, she lived only the numerical equivalent of ויהיו (*va-yihyu*), *it endured*. From here we learn that whoever lacks children lacks life. Moreover, he is considered dead, as is said: *Give me children!* [*If not, I am dead*] (Genesis 30:1)."

51. ***The cows went straight ahead, along the road*** The verse continues: *to Beth Shemesh. They went along a single highway, lowing as they went, and turning off neither to the right nor to the left*. The cows were returning the ark from Philistine territory to the land of Israel.

52. **The Companions have already established … Which song…** See BT *Avodah Zarah* 24b: "וישרנה הפרות (*Va-yishsharnah ha-parot*), *The cows went straight ahead, along the road to Beth Shemesh*…. What is the meaning of *va-yishsharnah*? Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Me'ir, 'They sang שירה (*shirah*), a song.'… Which song did they sing?… Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish said, 'The orphaned psalm [whose author is anonymous]: *A psalm.*

Sing to YHVH a new song, for He has worked wonders; His right hand and His holy arm have won Him victory.’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 54:4; *Zohar* 2:137b–138a 3:201a.

53. **everything created… chants praises and songs before Him…** According to *Pereq Shirah*, an early mystical text, every created thing sings a biblical verse to God.

54. **it is always written: *A psalm of David*, or *Of David, a psalm*** These are the most frequent titles. On the distinction between the two, see BT *Pesaḥim* 117a; *Midrash Tehillim* 24:1; Rashi on Psalms 23:1; Jacob bar Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 92; Todros Abulafia, *Sha’ar ha-Razim*, 48; *Zohar* 1:39b, 67a; 2:50a, 140a, 170a. Cf. 1:87a, 239a.

55. **Because this psalm is destined to be sung by the Holy Spirit** By *Shekhinah*, known as Holy Spirit (*Zohar* 1:67a, 85a; 2:97b, 238b; 3:61a) and also called *psalm* (1:39b, 67a; 2:140a, 170a).

56. **Then, *Sing to YHVH a new song…***

See *Tanḥuma, Beshallaḥ* 10; *Mekhilta, Shirta* 1; *Targum*, Song of Songs 1:1.

57. **The moon, which will then be *new under the sun*** *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the moon, will be renewed and directly beneath Her partner, *Tif’eret*, symbolized by the sun.

58. **The rung singing this song** *Shekhinah*.

59. **for by them it is supported, by right and left** *Shekhinah* is supported and embraced by *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, the divine right and left. See *Zohar* 2:138a.

60. **due to the serpent who inflicted death upon all** By tempting Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. As a result of Adam and Eve’s sin, they forfeited immortality.

61. ***I will put enmity between you and the woman*** The verse continues: *and between your seed and her seed. He will strike you at the head, and you will strike him at the heel*. This constitutes the conclusion of the divine curse delivered to the serpent.

62. **For so many boats sail the immense ocean…** So many different potencies populate the ocean of *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 2:30a, 50b.

63. ***woman in awe of YHVH*** *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine, characterized by awe. See above, page 206.

64. ***at the head*, sustained by *the head*, supernal world** The highest sefirotic realms.

65. **The days of a human being are created… on those supernal rungs** Human life expresses the vitality of the seven lower *sefirot*, the seven cosmic days of Creation.

66. **Once they cease existing on those rungs… *seventy years…*** The normal human life span of seventy years reflects the energy of the seven lower *sefirot*.

67. **from here on, there remains no rung on which to abide** Seventy years exhausts the sefirotic septet.

68. ***their extension*** רהבם (*Rohbam*), "*Their pride*" or "*the best of them*." Rabbi Yose's interpretation accords with the Septuagint and Vulgate, reflecting רחבם (*roḥbam*), "their extent, span."

69. ***The days of the years of Abraham's life endured*** The verse actually reads: *These are the days of the years of Abraham's life*, but almost all *Zohar* manuscripts read: *endured*.

70. ***The years of Ishmael's life endured*** Here too, the verse actually reads: *These are the years of Ishmael's life*. Most *Zohar* manuscripts read simply: *the years of Ishmael's life*, but I follow the reading of N23 and P1: *The years of Ishmael's life endured*, which matches Rabbi Yose's conclusion.

71. **But he returned to God** On Ishmael's repentance, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 30:4; 59:7; 62:5; BT *Bava Batra* 16b.

72. ***Sarah died in Kiriath Arba*** The verse continues: *—that is, Hebron*.

73. **Nothing like this appears regarding any other women of the world** See above, page 205.

74. **for whom water flowed only through the virtue of Miriam** See BT *Ta'anit* 9a: "Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Yehudah says, '…A well [miraculously accompanied Israel in the desert] for the merit of Miriam… When Miriam died, the well disappeared, as is said: *Miriam died there*, and immediately afterwards: *There was no water for the community* (Numbers 20:2).'"

See *Tosefta, Sotah* 11:1, 8; *Zohar* 3:102b–103a, 181b.

75. **This verse has been established** See above, pages 104–7; *Zohar* 2:175a–b.

76. **Land of the Living** *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:65b–66a, 95b, 115a, 143b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 62 (77).

77. **Her King** *Tif'eret*.

78. **supernal Patriarchs—mystery of ו (*vav*)** The sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret* are symbolized by the three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This triad, together with the following triad (*Netsaḥ, Hod*, and *Yesod*), are symbolized by the letter ו (*vav*) of יהוה (*YHVH*), whose numerical value is six.

79. **He is *a son of free ones*** *Tif'eret* issues from the union of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, known as *free ones*. See above, pages 104–6.

80. **supernal world, who continuously generates all life…** *Binah*, the Divine Mother.

81. ***My firstborn son is Israel*** *Tif'eret*, whose full name is *Tif'eret Yisra'el*, "Beauty of Israel," is the son of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*. See *Zohar* 1:95b, 223b.

82. **this *land* and world below suck only from the dominion…** Unlike *Shekhinah*, Land of the Living, who imbibes the flow of emanation directly, the earthly world derives sustenance from intermediary angelic powers.

83. **all of them from that king called *child*** All the angels appointed over the various nations of the world derive sustenance from Metatron, the chief angel, also known as נער (*na'ar*), the "child" ("lad," heavenly "servant").

See BT *Yevamot* 16b: “Rabbi Shemu’el son of Naḥman said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan, ‘This verse was spoken by the Prince of the World: *I was a child and now I am old* (Psalms 37:25). Who spoke it? If you suggest the blessed Holy One, does He age? Then perhaps David spoke it; but was he so old? You must conclude that the Prince of the World spoke it.’”

See *Tosafot, Yevamot* 16b, s.v. *pasuq zeh; Zohar* 1:95b, 143a, 162a, 181b; *ZḤ* 85c (*MhN, Rut*); Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 379–80; Margaliot, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 89–90.

84. **This one** Metatron.

85. **since the moon is tainted and darkened** The darkening of the moon symbolizes a defect in *Shekhinah* and Her separation from Her partner, *Tif’eret*. In such a state, She cannot convey the flow of blessing to Metatron and those below.

86. **ever since Adam inflicted this upon them** By eating from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. See above, page 210.

87. **except for Moses, Aaron, and Miriam …** See BT *Bava Batra* 17a: “Over six the Angel of Death had no dominion: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Moses, Aaron, and Miriam…. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, because of them is written [that they died] *by the mouth of* *YHVH* (Numbers 33:38; Deuteronomy 34:5). But of Miriam is not written *by the mouth of* *YHVH*! Rabbi El’azar said, ‘Miriam also died by a kiss…, but why is *by the mouth of* *YHVH* not said of her? Because such an expression would be unseemly [describing *YHVH* kissing a woman].’”

88. **בקרית ארבע (*be-Qiryat Arba*), *by Kiriath Arba*, City of Four** The preposition ב (*be*) can mean “in” or “by.” Here *Kiriath Arba*, “City of Four,” symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who completes the sefirotic tetrad that also includes *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*. See *Zohar* 1:248b.

89. **mystery of קרית שמע (*qeriyyat Shema*), reciting *Shema*** The prayer recited morning and evening, comprising

Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Numbers 15:37–41. According to certain views, it is divided variously into four portions. See *Zohar* 3:228a (*RM*); *ZḤ* 48a, 90c (*MhN, Rut*), 119c (*TZ*); *TZ* 10, 25b; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 39–40.

90. חברון **(*Ḥevron*), *Hebron*, for King David** אתחבר **(*itḥabbar*), joined, the patriarchs** David was crowned in Hebron, joining the three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) who were buried there in the Cave of Machpelah. King David symbolizes *Shekhinah* (known as *Malkhut* ["Kingdom"]), who completes the tetrad that also includes *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the three patriarchs.

See 2 Samuel 2:1–4; *Zohar* 1:79b, 99a, 246b; 2:31a.

91. **When the days of a human being abide on supernal rungs** When he lives a life of holiness, imitating the divine. See above, page 211.

92. **Then he obtains authorization and plucks out the soul** The subject is the Angel of Death, who is identical with the demonic, according to BT *Bava Batra* 16a: "Resh Lakish said, 'Satan, the evil impulse, and the Angel of Death are one and the same.'" See the description of Satan's itinerary on the same page: "He descends and seduces, ascends and arouses wrath, obtains authorization and seizes the soul."

See Rashi on BT *Shabbat* 89a, s.v. *ba hasatan; Zohar* 1:10b, 46b, 148a (*ST*), 152b; 2:33b, 268b.

93. **swooping through the world in a single moment** See BT *Berakhot* 4b: "A tanna taught: 'Michael [reaches his destination] in one [glide], Gabriel in two, Elijah in four, and the Angel of Death in eight—in time of plague, however, in one.'"

94. **Happy are the righteous, who are undefiled and remain so!** See *Midrash Mishlei* 9:2; *Zohar* 1:168a.

95. **lustrous** קסטירא (*Qastira*), "Tin," from the Greek *kassiteros*. See *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Targum Yerushalmi*

(frag.), Numbers 31:22; *Zohar* 1:151a: קסטוטירא (*qastutira*); 2:24b; *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 188.

96. **Celestial Serpent—all gossamer stars clustered within…** Apparently the Milky Way. The phrase "mounds upon mounds" renders תלי תלין (*tillei tillin*), deriving from BT *Menaḥot* 29b. Here the expression alludes to תלי (*teli*), which in medieval Jewish astronomy usually refers to the constellation Draco ("Dragon"), extending more than halfway around the North Pole.

See Shabbetai Donnolo, *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, on *Sefer Yetsirah* 6:1: "When God created the sky above us, divided into seven heavens, He created the תלי (*teli*), dragon, out of fire and water in the form of a great serpent—like a great, sinuous snake. He gave it a head and a tail and placed it in the fourth heaven, the middle one, abode of the sun, and He stretched it from one end to the other like a bar, like a sinuous serpent… and all the stars, luminaries, and constellations are attached to it. As threads of warp and woof are attached to a weaver's beam, so all the stars in the seven heavens above and below are attached to it."

See *Zohar* 1:44a (*Heikh*); 2:35a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:607, 666.

97. **requiting** סטירו (*Setiru*), "Wages, reward." See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 22:30; Leviticus 19:13.

98. **encharged with requiting the deeds of inhabitants of the world** According to astrology, the constellations of stars determine human fate. Rabbi Yehudah teaches that their influence requites human action.

99. **dazzling demons** טהירין (*Tehirin*), from the Aramaic root meaning "brightness, noon." One class of demons is named טהרי (*tiharei*), "noonday demons."

See Psalms 91:6 and Rashi, ad loc.; *Targum*, Song of Songs 4:6; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 6:24, Deuteronomy 32:24; *Zohar* 1:94a, 130b, 198b, 200a, 232b

(*Tos*); 2:130a–b, 195b, 205a, 207a. The Hebrew root טהר (*thr*), "pure," lends this demonic name a euphemistic tone.

100. **if a person comes to purify himself… to defile himself…** See BT *Shabbat* 104a: "Resh Lakish said, '… If one comes to defile himself, he is provided an opening; if one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.'"

Cf. *Yoma* 39a: "Our Rabbis taught: *'Do not defile yourselves with them, and thus become defiled*. If one defiles himself slightly, he is defiled greatly; below, he is defiled from above; in this world, he is defiled in the world to come.'"

See *Zohar* 1:53b–54a, 169b, 198b; 2:50a; 3:47a; and *Makkot* 10b: "Rabbah son of Bar Ḥana said in the name of Rabbi Huna (some say, Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi El'azar), 'From the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings it can be demonstrated that one is led on the path one wishes to take.'"

101. נחשיא **(*naḥshayya*), sorcery** The word means both "sorceries" and "serpents." See *Targum Onqelos*, Numbers 23:23; 24:1.

102. **As one arouses, so he draws upon himself from above** See above, note 100, and the passage cited from books of Eastern Wisdom (above, page 122): "As one's aspiration is directed in this world, so he draws upon himself a spirit from above, corresponding to the aspiration to which he cleaves."

103. **Balaam defiled himself every night with his donkey…** See BT *Sanhedrin* 105a–b; *Zohar* 3:207a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 14–15 (18); idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 75.

104. **Next he took the snake's head… and concocted another incense** See *Zohar* 3:198b.

105. **He traced a circle** A common magical practice. See BT *Ta'anit* 23a; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 121.

106. **that celestial serpent** See above, page 215.

107. **all begins solely with this** With the serpent.

108. **Why are all kinds of witchcraft and sorcery found especially in women?** See BT *Sanhedrin* 67a: “Most women engage in witchcraft.”

Cf. M *Avot* 2:7; JT *Qiddushin* 4:11, 66b; *Soferim* 15:7; Rashi, Rashbam, and Ibn Ezra on Exodus 22:17; *ZḤ* 81b-c (*MhN, Rut*).

109. **‘When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with slime’** See BT *Shabbat* 145b–146a: “Rav Yosef taught: ‘… When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), filth [or: slime, lewdness].’”

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 4:1 (variants); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 21; *Zohar* 1:36b–37a, 52a, 54a, 122b.

110. **He came and kissed him** Rabbi Yose came and kissed Rabbi Yitsḥak.

111. **He asked him** Rabbi Yose asked Rabbi Yitsḥak.

112. **his father** Beor. In BT *Sanhedrin* 105a, Beor is identified as Laban the Aramean. See *Zohar* 1:166b; 2:192a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:303, n. 229; 6:123, n. 722.

On Laban’s powers of witchcraft, see Genesis 30:27; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and *Sekhel Tov*, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:133b, 139b, 166b–167b.

113. **Uzza and Azael…** These two angels opposed the creation of Adam and Eve, fell from heaven, and were attracted by *the daughters of men* (Genesis 6:2). They were punished by being bound in chains of iron in the mountains of darkness, from where they still manage to wreak havoc, teaching sorcery to humans.

See 1 Enoch 6–8; Jubilees 5; BT *Yoma* 67b; *Aggadat Bereshit*, intro, 39; *Midrash Avkir*, 7 (cited in *Yalqut Shim’oni*, Genesis, 44); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 22; *Zohar* 1:9b, 23a (*TZ*), 37a, 37a (*Tos*), 58a, 133b; 3:208a–b, 212a–b; *ZḤ* 81a–b (*MhN, Rut*).

114. **He said** Rabbi Yose said.

115. ***He did not go… to encounter serpentine sorceries…*** Why on this occasion did Balaam turn toward the wilderness?

116. **impure spirit ruling the wilderness** On the desert as the abode of the demonic, see *Zohar* 1:14b, 169b, 178b; 2:157a, 184a, 236b–237a; 3:63b.

117. **the Children of Israel made the calf to defile themselves with it** By fashioning and worshiping the Golden Calf, Israel drew upon themselves the impure spirit. See *Zohar* 2:236b–237a; 3:211b; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 24:1.

118. **when Israel stood at Mount Sinai, their slime ceased…** See BT *Shabbat* 145b–146a: "Rav Yosef taught: '… When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with slime. Israel, who stood at Mount Sinai—their slime ceased. Star-worshipers, who did not stand at Mount Sinai —their slime did not cease.'"

119. **women are exempt from commandments of Torah** Women are exempt from positive commandments performed at a specific time. See M *Qiddushin* 1:7.

120. **after they sinned they all slipped back into their slime as before** Through worshiping the Golden Calf, Israel again became defiled. See *Zohar* 1:52b, 63b.

Actually, according to rabbinic tradition, the Israelite women opposed the construction of the Golden Calf, refusing to contribute their jewelry to fashioning it.

See *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 19; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Pinḥas* 7; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 32:3; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 45.

121. **women derive from the left side and cling to severe Judgment** *Din* ("Judgment") on the left side of the sefirotic tree is the source of the demonic and is associated with the feminine.

122. **everything clings to and follows its species** Its own kind. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:3; BT Bava *Qamma* 92b; *Zohar* 1:20b, 137b, 167b.

123. **Balaam first defiled himself to draw upon himself impure spirit** See above, page 216.

124. **during the days of a woman's impurity, a man must beware of her…** During her menstrual period. See Leviticus 15:19–24; 18:19.

125. **chirping of a bird… serpentine sorcerer?** What is the connection between the bird and the serpent? See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 11:4.

126. **No one in the world escapes him** No one escapes the demonic serpent.

127. ***He will swallow up death forever…*** Death is a manifestation of the demonic. See BT *Bava Batra* 16a: "Resh Lakish said, 'Satan, the evil impulse, and the Angel of Death are one and the same.'"

128. **Abraham recognized a sign in that cave** The cave of Machpelah, purchased by Abraham as a burial site for Sarah. The abrupt beginning of this passage suggests that it was originally preceded by a related passage that has been lost.

129. **previously he had entered and seen Adam and Eve buried there** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 36: "[Abraham] ran to fetch a calf [for the three messengers visiting him (Genesis 18:7)], but the calf ran away from him and entered the cave of Machpelah; so he went in after it, and there he found Adam and Eve lying on their beds asleep, with lamps burning above them and a fragrant aroma around them… Therefore he desired to possess the cave of Machpelah as a burial site."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:8; BT *Eruvin* 53a; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 20; *Ba'al ha-Turim*, Genesis 18:7; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 23:9; *Zohar* 1:57b, 81a (*ST*), 127b–128b, 248b; 3:164a; *ZḤ* 21a (*MhN*), 79d (*MhN*).

130. **his image** The image of Adam.

131. **that same image was standing nearby** The image of Adam, who had lived in the Garden of Eden.

132. **as a person departs this world he sees Adam…** See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:18: “Death is decreed upon all the righteous who spring from him [Adam]. They do not depart this life without first gazing upon the face of *Shekhinah* and reproving Adam, saying: ‘You inflicted death upon us!’ Adam responds: ‘As for me, I possess only one sin, while in your case, every single one of you possesses more than four.’”

See *Tanḥuma, Ḥuqqat* 16; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Ḥuqqat* 39; *Zohar* 1:57b, 65b, 81a (*ST*).

133. **Ephron** The Hittite who owned the cave of Machpelah.

134. **he asked at first for something he didn’t need** Abraham did not need and desire just any burial site, but specifically the cave he had previously encountered.

135. ***Ephron* יושב (*yoshev*) *was sitting*… spelled: ישב (*yashav*), *sat*…** The deficient spelling (without the ו [*vav*]) enables Rabbi Yehudah to read the word in the past tense. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:7.

136. ***among you*** The full verse reads: *so he will give me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the edge of his field; for full price let him give it to me as an inheritance for burial among you*.

137. **He was running after that calf…** See above, note 129. The verse in Genesis reads: *Abraham ran to the herd and fetched a calf, tender and good*.

138. **he used to pray every day** According to rabbinic tradition, the patriarchs instituted daily prayer. See BT *Berakhot* 26b: “Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Ḥanina said, ‘The patriarchs instituted the prayers.’… Abraham instituted the morning prayer,… Isaac, the afternoon prayer,… Jacob, the evening prayer.” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9.

139. **Therefore he asked for it** He asked Ephron for the cave as a burial site.

140. **So they would not scrutinize him, seeing that he didn’t need it** If Abraham had requested the cave

before Sarah's death, the Hittites would have suspected that it contained some buried treasure.

141. **since he didn't realize what it was!** Ephron had no idea that Adam and Eve were buried there. See Naḥmanides on Genesis 23:9: "Ephron sold him everything for the price of the field, since he assumed there was no grave there."

142. **so Abraham knew he was destined to be buried there** Seeing Adam is a sign of impending death. See above, note 132. Since Abraham saw Adam in his burial site, he realized that he too would be buried there.

143. **Fortress Quaestor** קוסטרא (*Qustera*). The root *qstr* appears in two senses in the *Zohar:* one deriving from the Latin *castrum* (pl. *castra*), "fortress, castle" (as in *Zohar* 1:29a, 30a); the other from the Latin *quaestor*, a Roman official (JT *Eruvin* 6:2, 23b; *Zohar* 1:19b, 53b, 62a (*Tos*); 2:58b, 208b; 3:13a). Here, apparently, both senses apply.

144. **are you sequestered** את קטיר (*At qetir*), "Are you bound," attested by several manuscripts, instead of איתּ קטיר (*it qetir*), "is there connected?" The latter reading yields a different interpretation of Abraham's question: "Is there an adjoining fortress here?" i.e., "Is there a burial site for me too?" See *KP; DE; OY;* Scholem.

145. **The blessed Holy One buried me** See the sources cited above, note 129.

146. **I have been hidden in the skin of a sling** Barely escaping punishment for disobeying God's command and eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. See BT *Shabbat* 152a: "Rabbi Eli'ezer said, '… The souls of the wicked are continually muzzled, while one angel stands at one end of the world and another stands at the other end, and they sling their souls [the souls of the wicked] to each other, as is said: *The soul of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling* (1 Samuel 25:29).'"

See Radak on the verse in Samuel; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 351–53 (and n. 171, where Scholem cites De

León's likely source in Jacob ha-Kohen's *Sefer ha-Orah*); idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 373 (and n. 6), 399; *Zohar 1:77b*, 217b; 2:142b; 3:25a, 185b–186a, 213b; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 345–47.

"Sling" renders the Zoharic neologism קירטא (*qirta*). See *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 190; *KP* and *OY*, ad loc.; *Ma'arikh*, s.v. *gulda de-qirta;* Liebes, *Peraqim*, 383–93, especially 391. Liebes suggests a different interpretation: "hidden like a carrot stem." Cf. *DE*.

147. **From now on—because of you—there is enduring ascension…** Abraham's righteous conduct atones for Adam's sin, enabling him to ascend to his place in paradise. See *Zohar* 3:111b (*RM*); *ZḤ* 33c-d.

148. ***The field and the cave that was in it arose—rising, literally…*** The word ויקם (*va-yaqom*), literally, "it arose," means in this verse "it was established," passing into Abraham's possession. The full verse reads: *The field and the cave that was in it were established for Abraham as an inheritance for burial from the Hittites*.

Following midrashic tradition, Rabbi El'azar reads the word hyperliterally. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:8: "*The field of Ephron that was in Machpelah arose* (Genesis 23:17). For it had fallen low and now it rose; it had belonged to someone lowly and now it was transferred to someone great. *That was in Machpelah*… Rabbi Abbahu said, 'This indicates that the blessed Holy One כפף (*kafaf*), bent, the stature of Adam and buried him within it.'"

On Adam's original cosmic stature, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:6; BT *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Bava Batra* 75a; *Sanhedrin* 100a; *Araqim* 6 (*Otsar Midrashim*, 1:70–71); *Zohar* 1:53b; Altmann, "The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends"; Urbach, *The Sages*, 227–32.

149. **because of the sin we engendered In** the Garden of Eden.

150. **but Eve did not** Embarrassed by her conduct in the Garden, she could not face Adam in the presence of

Sarah, who was so righteous.

151. **not לשרה (*le-Sarah*) but *et Sarah*, amplifying the meaning…** The object of the sentence, Sarah, is preceded not by the preposition ל (*le*) but rather by the accusative particle את (*et*). Grammatically, *et* as an accusative particle has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when *et* appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:90a, 135b.

152. **Do not read: בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*…** According to Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah (*Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9), בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*, is an anagram of באברהם (*be-Avraham*), "through Abraham," indicating that *heaven and earth* were created for his sake.

See *Zohar* 1:3b, 86b, 91b, 93a, 105b, 154b, 230b; 3:117a.

153. ***generations of heaven and earth*, not… of human beings** Referring to Adam and Eve, who were engendered by *heaven and earth*, not by human parents.

154. ***The field and the cave that was in it were established for Abraham*** On account of Abraham, those buried in the cave (Adam and Eve) were firmly established.

155. **Isn't this cave double?…** The place-name מכפלה (*makhpelah*) is interpreted according to the root כפל (*kphl*), "double." See BT *Eruvin* 53a: "*The cave of Machpelah*. Rav and Shemu'el: One says, 'Two chambers, one within the other.' The other says, 'A chamber and an upper chamber.'" Cf. Rashi and Naḥmanides on the verse.

156. **calling the field *double*!** And not the cave itself.

157. **The entire land of Israel אתכפל (*itkephal*), is enfolded…** Playing on מכפלה (*makhpelah*). See BT *Ḥullin* 91b: "*The land upon which you* [Jacob] *lie* [*I will give to you and to your seed*] (Genesis 28:13). What is so great about that? [The actual area of land occupied by Jacob's body was

miniscule.] Rabbi Yitsḥak said, ‘This teaches that the blessed Holy One קפלה (*qippelah*), folded up, the entire land of Israel and placed it beneath our father Jacob, so that it would be easily conquered by his descendants.’” Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:4; *Zohar* 1:72a.

On the centrality of Jerusalem, see *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 10: “The land of Israel sits in the center of the world, Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel, the Temple in the center of Jerusalem, the nave in the center of the Temple, the ark in the center of the nave, and in front of the ark the Rock of Foundation, from which the world was founded.”

158. **which exists both above and below** On the image of heavenly Jerusalem, see *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 1: “There is a Jerusalem above aligned with Jerusalem below. Out of His love for the one below, He fashioned another above…. He has sworn that His presence will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem until the earthly Jerusalem is rebuilt.”

See Revelation 21:2; *Targum Yonatan*, Psalms 122:3; BT *Ta’anit* 5a; *Zohar* 1:1b, 80b (*ST*), 183b, 231a; 3:15b, 68b, 147b.

159. **Jerusalem above, linked in two directions: above and below** Heavenly Jerusalem symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who links the *sefirot* above Her with the worlds below.

160. **Jerusalem below, linked in two directions: below and above** Earthly Jerusalem nourishes the entire world through its link with the divine source above.

161. **She is double** *Shekhinah* is double and called *makhpelah*.

162. ***like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH*** The field of *Shekhinah*, also known as the Holy Apple Orchard.

See BT *Ta’anit* 29b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 11; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35–37; *Zohar* 1:36a, 85a–b, 122a, 142b, 143b, 224b, 249b; 2:60b, 61b; 3:74a, 84a, 133b (*IR*), 135b (*IR*), 286b–287a, 288a (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365.

163. **Who is *double*? ה (*He*) of the holy name…** The letter ה (*he*) appears twice in the name יהוה (*YHVH*): once symbolizing the Divine Mother, *Binah;* once symbolizing *Shekhinah*.

164. **Even though it really was a double cave, a cave within a cave** See BT *Eruvin* 53a: "*The cave of Machpelah*. Rav and Shemu'el: One says, 'Two chambers, one within the other.' The other says, 'A chamber and an upper chamber.'"

165. **while Torah calls it *the cave of the field of Machpelah*, fittingly** Alluding to *Shekhinah*, the supernal field known as *makhpelah, double*.

166. **so that this world corresponds to the pattern above** A general principle of Kabbalah. See *Zohar* 1:38a, 58a, 145b, 156b, 158b, 205b; 2:15b (*MhN*), 20a (*MhN*), 48b, 82b, 251a (*Heikh*); 3:40b, 65b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:273.

167. ***Abraham was old*, בא בימים (*ba ba-yamim*), *coming into days…*** The verse continues: *and YHVH blessed Abraham with everything*. The idiom בא בימים (*ba ba-yamim*)—normally understood as "advanced in days, advanced in years"—is here interpreted hyperliterally.

168. **This verse has been discussed** See *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 8; *Zohar* 1:94b.

169. **his deeds drew him near** See the remark of Akaviah son of Mahalalel to his son in M *Eduyyot* 5:7: "Your deeds will draw you near, and your deeds will keep you afar." Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 18.

170. **drawing nearer every day—rung by rung** Ascending toward divinity and up the sefirotic ladder. See *Zohar* 1:80a, 83b–84a.

171. ***coming into days*—into those supernal days…** He entered the cosmic days of Creation, the seven *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Shekhinah*. Abraham progressed through

them all, beginning with *Shekhinah* and culminating with *Ḥesed*. See *Zohar* 1:103a, 126a (*MhN*), 142a, 224a; 3:170b.

172. ***with everything*, since from there issue all blessings, all goodness** *Everything* symbolizes *Yesod*, who channels the entire flow of emanation to *Shekhinah* and the worlds below. See Naḥmanides, ad loc.

173. **masters of return** Those who, having sinned, succeed in turning back to God.

174. **in a single hour… they draw near…over many years** See BT *Avodah Zarah* 10b: "Rabbi wept, saying: 'One acquires eternal life in a single hour, another after many years!' See ibid., 17a, 18a.

175. **'In the place in that world where masters of return stand…'** In the world to come. See BT *Berakhot* 34b: "Rabbi Abbahu said, 'In the place where masters of return stand, the completely righteous do not stand.'" See *Zohar* 1:39a (*Heikh*); 2:106a–b; 3:16b, 202b.

176. **drawing the flow upon themselves so passionately…** The genuine intensity of their return to God stimulates a flow of emanation from above, enabling them to contact God directly.

177. **every single one according to his rung, fittingly** See Rabbi Yitshak's description of the accommodations in the world to come: BT *Shabbat* 152a: "Every single righteous person is given an abode befitting his honor."

178. **those outer sites and rungs** Outside the palaces of Paradise.

179. **Who are they?** Who dwells in those courts?

180. ***I will give you free access among these standing here*** The verse reads: *If you walk in My paths and keep My charge, then you will govern My house and guard My courts, and I will give you free access among those standing here*. The courts of Paradise are occupied by angels.

181. **Those who attain this rung become messengers of the world…** See *Zohar* 1:100a; *ZḤ* 19a (*MhN*), 20d–21a (*MhN*); *TZ, Haqdamah*, 16b.

182. **whoever becomes defiled in this world** By sinning.

183. **those impure ones** Demonic powers.

184. **These become demons of the world** Such souls wreak havoc throughout the world. See *Zohar* 1:14b, 28b–29a (*TZ*), 48a, 100a; 2:99b, 118a (*RM*); 3:25a, 70a, 143a–b (*IR*); *ZḤ* 11a (*MhN*); *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Margaliot, par. 770.

185. ***court of the Dwelling*** The *Dwelling* (or "Tabernacle") in the wilderness symbolizes Paradise, in whose court stand the angels and these worthy souls.

186. **not in the court but in the house** Within the palaces of Paradise.

187. **He should have said: *May he be sated*…** In the third person.

188. **'Seating is available in the Enclosure only for kings**…' See BT *Yoma* 25a: "No one may sit in the עזרה (*Azarah*), Temple Court, except kings of the House of David." The term *azarah* apparently means "enclosure" and usually refers to the court of the Temple. Here Rabbi Yose employs it to refer to the house within the court, namely, the palaces of Paradise.

189. **site for supernal devotees who enter within** Futher within, to the recesses of Paradise. See *Zohar* 1:39a (*Heikh*).

190. **each put to shame by the light of his companion** See BT *Bava Batra* 75a: "Rabbah said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, '… The blessed Holy One will fashion a canopy for each and every [righteous] person befitting his honor.'… Rabbi Ḥanina said, '… Each one will be scorched by the canopy of his fellow. Alas for such shame! Alas for such humiliation!'"

191. **when a person sleeps… and souls have to wander the world…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:9: "It was

said in the name of Rabbi Me’ir: ‘This soul fills the body, and when a person sleeps she ascends, drawing down life from above.’” See *Zohar* 1:83a, 92a, 200a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:809–14.

192. **Countenance of Days** The face of God, Ancient of Days, a title deriving from Daniel 7:9: *The Ancient of Days sat,... the hair on His head like clean fleece, His throne—flames of fire*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 35:2; *Zohar* 1:83a, 89b (*ST*), 188a; 3:132b (*IR*), 201a; *ZḤ* 19a (*MhN*).

193. **who divulge to her imminent events** Demons possess limited foreknowledge. See Naḥmanides on Leviticus 17:7; *Zohar* 1:83a, 200a; 2:251b (*Heikh*); 3:25a.

194. **sometimes conveying deceptions, toying with her...** A rabbinic tradition in BT *Berakhot* 55b states that angels convey prophetic dreams, while demons convey false ones.

See *Zohar* 1:83a, 150b, 183a, 199b–200a; 2:130a, 264a (*Heikh*); 3:25a, 156b.

195. **those holy ones** Angels.

196. **ravaging bands of truculent stingers** חבילי טריקין (*Ḥavilei teriqin*). The first word derives from either חבל (*ḥevel*), “band, group,” or the verb חבל (*ḥvl*), “to injure, destroy.” The second word derives from the root טרק (*trq*), “to sting, bite.” See *Zohar* 1:62a (*Tos*), 237b, 243b–244a; 3:52b, 62b, 154b, 181a, 291b (*IZ*).

197. **like grain mingled with straw** See Jeremiah 23:28, and BT *Berakhot* 55a: “Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai, ‘Just as there cannot be wheat without straw, so there cannot be a dream without nonsense.’”

198. **when souls depart from the body in this world** At death.

199. **dazzling demons** טהירין (*Tehirin*), from the Aramaic root meaning “brightness, noon.” One class of demons is named טהרי (*tiharei*), “noonday demons.”

See Psalms 91:6 and Rashi, ad loc; *Targum*, Song of Songs 4:6; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 6:24, Deuteronomy 32:24; *Zohar* 1:94a, 125a, 198b, 200a, 232b (*Tos*); 2:130a–b, 195b, 205a, 207a. The Hebrew root טהר (*thr*), "pure," lends this demonic name a euphemistic tone.

200. **If they belong to their side** If the departing souls belong to the demonic side, due to their earthly conduct.

201. **Dumah** Literally, "silence," a name for the netherworld in the Bible. See Psalms 94:17: *Unless YHVH had been my help, my soul would have nearly dwelt in dumah*. Cf. Psalms 115:17.

In rabbinic literature Dumah is the angel in charge of souls of the dead (BT *Berakhot* 18b, *Shabbat* 152b, *Sanhedrin* 94a). In the *Zohar* he retains this role but also oversees Hell. See 1:8a–b, 62b, 94a, 102a, 124a (*MhN*), 237b.

202. **Then they ascend** The souls briefly escape the torments of Hell.

203. **so it continues till the end of twelve months...** According to M *Eduyyot* 2:10, the wicked are punished in Hell for twelve months. See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a: "Transgressors of Israel who sin with their body and transgressors of the Gentiles who sin with their body descend to Hell and are punished there for twelve months. After twelve months their body is consumed; their soul, burned; and the wind scatters them under the soles of the feet of the righteous.... But as for the heretics, informers, apostates, skeptics, those who rejected Torah and denied the resurrection of the dead, those who abandoned the ways of the community, those who *spread* their *terror in the land of the living* (Ezekiel 32:23), and those who sinned and made the masses sin..., these descend to Hell and are punished there for generation after generation.... Hell will be consumed, but they will not be consumed."

See *Zohar* 1:106b–107a (*MhN*); *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Wistinetzki, par. 555 (ed. Margaliot, par. 46).

204. **for whom abundant goodness is treasured away in that world** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12a: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'With the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, one could gaze and see from one end of the universe to the other. When the blessed Holy One foresaw the corrupt deeds of the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Dispersion [the generation of the Tower of Babel], He immediately hid it from them, as is written: *The light of the wicked is withheld* (Job 38:15). For whom did He hide it? For the righteous in the time to come.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:6; 41:3; *Shemot Rabbah* 35:1; *Tanḥuma, Shemini*, 9; *Bahir* 97–98 (147); *Zohar* 1:7a, 31b–32a, 45b–46a, 47a, 59a; 2:127a, 148b–149a, 220a–b; 3:88a, 173b.

205. **The inmost realm of all is reserved for those who know…** See *Zohar* 1:182a; 2:247b (*Heikh*); 3:112a.

206. ***No eye has seen, O God, but You…*** See BT *Berakhot* 34b: "Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, 'All the prophets prophesied only concerning the days of the Messiah, but as for the world that is coming, *No eye has seen, O God, but You*, [*what You will do for one who awaits You*]…. All the prophets prophesied only concerning masters of return [turning back to God], but as for the completely righteous, *No eye has seen, O God, but You*.'"

207. **in whom their Lord glories every day** See Isaiah 60:21, cited often in the *Zohar: Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever—sprout of My planting, work of My hands, that I may be glorified*. Cf. ibid. 44:23, 49:3, 61:3.

208. **supernal holy ones** Angels.

209. **after first performing deeds** Living righteously.

210. **those supernal days** The *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Shekhinah*. See above, page 226.

211. **the site from which all blessings flow** *Yesod*, who channels the entire flow of emanation to *Shekhinah* and the worlds below.

212. ***YHVH blessed Abraham with everything*** The full verse reads: *Abraham was old, coming into days, and YHVH blessed Abraham with everything*. See above, pages 225–26.

213. ***with everything… the* river whose waters never cease** *Yesod*. See *Zohar* 1:17a, 195b; 2:157a.

214. **women of the world** Of other nations of the world.

215. **Therefore he made his servant swear…** See Genesis 24:2–4.

216. **He took his dust from the site of the Temple…** Rabbi Yitsḥak combines two midrashic motifs. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 12: "He created him from a pure, holy site. From where did He take him? From the site of the Temple." Cf. *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 11: "He began gathering the dust of Adam [see Genesis 2:7] from the four corners of the earth."

Cf. 2 Enoch 30:13; *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:8 (and Theodor, ad loc.); BT *Sanhedrin* 38a–b; JT *Nazir* 7:2, 56b; *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 3; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 2:7; *Zohar* 1:34b, 205b; 2:23b, 24b; 3:83a.

Here the four directions (east, south, north, west) symbolize *Tif'eret, Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Shekhinah*, respectively.

217. **when they engender a son, they draw down upon him holy spirit…** The act of sexual union, when performed in holiness, draws down a holy soul from the sefirotic realm. See *Zohar* 1:90b, 112a (*MhN*), 155a (*ST*); 3:56a; *ZḤ* 11a (*MhN*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1363–64. Cf. BT *Shevu'ot* 18b.

218. **body and soul render an account** Being jointly responsible for earthly conduct. See the parable in *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:1; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 4:5; BT *Sanhedrin* 91a–b; *Zohar* 1:65b, 79a; 2:199b; 3:126b.

219. **That very body** The resurrected body will be identical with the original body. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 95:1; BT *Pesaḥim* 68a, *Sanhedrin* 91b; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:4; *Tanḥuma, Vayiggash* 8; *Zohar* 1:115a (*MhN*), 126a (*MhN*), 181b; 2:100a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 87.

220. **returning to her realm according to her ways** Returning to her divine home when she separates from the body, based on her earthly conduct.

221. **He will shower dew from His head…** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 34: "Rabbi Yehudah said, '… In the time to come, the blessed Holy One will bring down a dew of revival, reviving the dead…*For your dew is a dew of lights…*' Rabbi Tanḥum said, '… From where does it descend? From the head of the blessed Holy One. In the time to come, He will shake the hair of His head and bring down a dew of revival, reviving the dead, as is said: *I was asleep, but my heart was awake….For my head is drenched with dew* (Song of Songs 5:2).'"

See BT *Shabbat* 88b; JT *Berakhot* 5:2, 9b; *Zohar* 1:232a; 3:128b (*IR*), 135b (*IR*).

222. **supernal lights** The *sefirot*.

223. **Tree of Life will pour forth incessant life** The sefirotic tree will vivify all existence ceaselessly.

224. **since the evil serpent prevails and the moon is obscured…** The empowerment of the demonic diminishes the light of the moon, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, and prevents Her union with *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the sun, thereby interrupting the flow of emanation from the Tree of Life.

See *Zohar* 1:114b; 2:184a; 3:275a; 3 Baruch 9:7. Correspondingly, when *Shekhinah* is weakened, the power of the demonic grows dominant. See 1:19b, 70b, 146a.

225. **eliminated by the blessed Holy One, as has been explained** See above, pages 211 and 219, where Zechariah 13:2 is cited: *I will eliminate the spirit of impurity from earth*.

226. ***The light of the moon will be like the light of the sun*** As originally. See BT *Ḥullin* 60b.

227. ***like the light of the seven days*** Of Creation.

228. **what will become of those bodies sown in a single soul?** Over the course of many lifetimes, a single soul may reincarnate in several bodies. At the end of days, which of these bodies will be resurrected? See Scholem, in *Tarbiz* 16 (1945): 142. On the doctrine of reincarnation, see idem, *Kabbalah*, 344–50.

229. **As they were a withered tree in this world…** Such bodies failed to engender new life, so their souls reincarnated in other bodies to have another opportunity to fulfill the command: *Be fruitful and multiply* (Genesis 1:28). At the time of resurrection, the original, fruitless bodies will remain so.

230. ***He will be like a tree planted by water…*** The verse reads: *He will be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by a stream… its leaves will be luxuriant… it does not cease to yield fruit*.

231. **it generated fruit** It engendered new life, fulfilling the command: *Be fruitful and multiply*.

232. **treasured away before Him since the day the world was created…** See BT *ḥagigah* 12a: “Rabbi El’azar said, ‘With the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, one could gaze and see from one end of the universe to the other. When the blessed Holy One foresaw the corrupt deeds of the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Dispersion [the generation of the Tower of Babel], He immediately hid it from them, as is written: *The light of the wicked is withheld* (Job 38:15). For whom did He hide it? For the righteous in the time to come, as is said: *God saw that the light was good*, and *good* means only the righteous one, as is said: *Say of the righteous one that he is good* (Isaiah 3:10).’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:6; 41:3; *Shemot Rabbah* 35:1; *Tanḥuma, Shemini*, 9; *Bahir* 97–98 (147); *Zohar* 1:7a, 31b–

32a, 45b–46a, 47a, 59a, 130b; 2:127a, 148b–149a, 220a–b; 3:88a, 173b.

233. **will revive the dead… *with healing in its wings*** See BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b–4a.

234. **The blessed Holy One will… pour upon those bodies other spirits** Differing with Rabbi Yose, Rabbi Yitsḥak insists that the previous bodies will also be revived. See *Zohar* 2:100a–b; 3:308a–b; cf. 1:130a (*MhN*).

235. **If they prove worthy of them** If those resurrected bodies live virtuously.

236. **they will become ashen cinders under the feet of the righteous** See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a: "Transgressors of Israel who sin with their body and transgressors of the Gentiles who sin with their body descend to Hell and are punished there for twelve months. After twelve months their body is consumed; their soul, burned; and the wind scatters them under the soles of the feet of the righteous, as is said: *You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet* (Malachi 3:21)."

237. ***Many of those who sleep in the dust of earth will awake…*** The verse continues: *these to everlasting life, these to shame and everlasting contempt.*

238. ***The one who brings forth their array by number…*** The full verse reads: *Lift your eyes on high and see: Who created these? The one who brings forth their array by number and calls them each by name: because of His great might and vast power, not one is missing*.

239. **All the dead of the land of Israel will arise first** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:1; JT *Kil'ayim* 9:4, 32c; *Tanḥuma, Vayḥi* 3.

240. ***Your dead will live!… my corpses will arise!…*** See BT *Ketubbot* 111a: "Rabbi Abba son of Memel objected, *'Your dead will live, my corpses will arise!* Doesn't *Your dead will live* refer to the dead of the land of Israel, and *my corpses will arise* to the dead outside the Land?'"

241. **later rolling underground until they reach the land of Israel** See BT *Ketubbot* 111a: "Rabbi Yirmeyah son of Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, 'Whoever walks four cubits in the land of Israel is assured membership in the world to come.' Now,… aren't the righteous outside the Land going to be revived? Rabbi Il'a replied, 'By rolling [underground to the land of Israel].' Rabbi Abba Sala the Great objected, 'Rolling will be painful to the righteous!' Abbaye replied, 'Tunnels will be made for them underground.'"

242. **There they will receive a soul, not in foreign territory** See *Zohar* 1:69a, 113b-114b (*MhN*).

243. **exact same image they bore in this world** Each soul, though deriving from the identical divine source, has its own unique image, an ethereal body. The soul is clothed in this image before descending to earth, retains it while in the physical body until shortly before death, and then regains it upon ascending.

See *Zohar* 1:90b–91a, 220a; 3:43a–b, 104a–b; Scholem, in *Tarbiz* 24 (1955): 293–95; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158–59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 251–73; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:770–73. Cf. Rashi on BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, s.v. *ve-ruḥot unshamot*.

244. **Every soul will enter her site** The body she occupied in this world, now resurrected.

245. **as soon as his soul departs, he does** A corpse, a body without a soul, imparts impurity. See Numbers 19:14: *When a human dies in a tent, anyone entering the tent and anyone in the tent will be impure seven days*.

Rabbi Yeisa apparently wonders: Shouldn't a living person, assailed by the evil impulse, be impure, while one who has died and is free of the evil impulse be rendered pure?

246. **when that evil impulse seizes a person's spirit** The evil impulse can manifest as the Angel of Death.

See BT *Bava Batra* 16a: “Resh Lakish said, ‘Satan, the evil impulse, and the Angel of Death are one and the same.’”

247. **their souls derive from the impure side** See *Zohar* 1:20b, 47a; *ZḤ* 10c (*MhN*). For parallel medieval Christian views of the demonic nature of the Jews, see Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*.

248. **once that impurity is poured out, the body is left…** Once the soul of a Gentile has departed, his body is no longer impure. See BT *Yevamot* 60b–61a: “Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai said, ‘The graves of Gentiles do not impart impurity by a tent [i.e., one who stands on or bends over such a grave, thereby constituting a tent with his body, is not rendered impure], as is said: *You, My sheep, sheep of My pasture, are human* [*and I am Your God*] (Ezekiel 34:31). You are called *human;* Gentiles are not called *human*.’”

Rabbi Shim’on assumes a connection between *human* and “impurity by a tent,” based on the wording of Numbers 19:14: *When a human dies in a tent, anyone entering the tent and anyone in the tent will be impure seven days*.

See *Zohar* 1:20b, 220a; 2:25b, 86a; 3:219a; *ZḤ* 78d (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 48a.

249. **whoever cleaves to a woman of the other nations is defiled** Rabbi El’azar’s harsh statement reflects the promiscuity prevalent in the Jewish community in thirteenth-century Castile.

See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 51–54 (63–67); Baer, in *Zion* 2 (1937): 31–33, 36–44; idem, *History*, 1:250–63; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1371–72; Assis, “Sexual Behavior in Mediaeval Hispano-Jewish Society.”

250. **On his father’s side he descends from Israel** Being born to a Jewish father.

251. **He became defiled previously…** The father became defiled the moment he united sexually with a non-Jewish woman.

252. ***Do not bow down to another god! For YHVH: His name is Jealous…*** The verse continues: *—He is a jealous God*. The command *Do not bow down to another god* is understood to mean "Do not lie down with a foreign woman."

See *Zohar* 2:3b, 61a, 87b, 90a, 243a; *ZḤ* 21a (*MhN*), 78c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 212; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 51 (63).

253. **jealous for this covenant** The covenant of circumcision.

254. **Once Abraham perceived wisdom, he sought to separate…** See above, pages 230–31.

255. ***I will have you swear by YHVH…*** Abraham makes his servant swear to find a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's relatives back in Mesopotamia.

256. ***From the daughters of the Canaanite,* precisely!** The singular, *Canaanite*, alludes to the demonic. See *Zohar* 1:73a, 80a (*ST*).

257. ***He has married the daughter of a foreign god*** The verse reads: *Judah has desecrated the sanctuary of YHVH, which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god*.

258. ***Among whom I dwell*** The full verse reads: *I will have you swear by YHVH, God of heaven and God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell*.

259. ***I,* precisely!** Referring to *Shekhinah*, who reveals the divine personality.

260. **holy covenant** The covenant of circumcision inscribed in the phallus.

261. **that woman** A foreign woman.

262. **another site** The site of sefirotic union between *Shekhinah* and *Yesod*, the divine phallus.

263. ***and at a slave-girl supplanting her mistress*** As a result of human sin, the demonic feminine, Lilith,

displaces *Shekhinah*, drawing the flow of emanation from *Yesod*. See above, pages 206–7.

264. **Although he made him swear by this covenant** Abraham made his servant swear by the covenant of circumcision. See Genesis 24:2: *Place your hand under my thigh*.

265. ***He will send His angel*** The verse continues: *before you, so you will take a wife for my son from there*.

266. **Angel of Covenant** *Shekhinah*, who joins with *Yesod*, the divine phallus, known as Covenant. See *Zohar* 1:102b, 135b.

267. **among all of them** Among his entire family back in Mesopotamia.

268. **the same day he set out, he reached the fountain…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 59:11, in the name of Rabbi Yitsḥak: "*I came today to the spring*. Today I set out, and today I arrived.'" See BT *Sanhedrin* 95a; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 16.

269. **Life in this world… and length of days in the world that is coming** See M *Avot* 6:7; *Kallah Rabbati* 5:7; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 24.

270. **What about those who suffer persecution?** If Torah provides life and freedom, how can you explain the torturous death of Torah scholars?

271. **This was decreed from above, as with Rabbi Akiva…** Their martyrdom was decreed by God. See BT *Menaḥot* 29b, where Moses challenges God over Akiva's cruel death at the hand of the Romans, and God responds: "Silence! So it has arisen in thought before Me!"

272. **Tree of Life—namely, Torah** Torah is identified with the Tree of Life, based on the description of wisdom in Proverbs 3:18: *She is a tree of life to those who grasp her*. See BT *Berakhot* 32b, 61b.

273. חרות **(*Ḥarut*), *Engraved, upon the tablets…*** The verse describes the tablets given to Moses on Mount Sinai:

The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:3: "*Engraved upon the tablets*. Do not read חרות (*ḥarut*), engraved, but rather חירות (*ḥeirut*), freedom. Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Neḥemiah, and the Rabbis. Rabbi Yehudah said, 'Freedom from the Angel of Death.' Rabbi Neḥemiah said, 'Freedom from kingdoms.' The Rabbis said, 'Freedom from suffering.'"

See M *Avot* 6:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 8:6; BT *Eruvin* 54a; *Zohar* 1:152b; 2:45b. On the notion that the Angel of Death is powerless against one engaged in Torah, see BT *Shabbat* 30b; *Bava Metsi'a* 86a; *Makkot* 10a.

274. **If only they had not sinned** At Sinai by worshiping the Golden Calf.

275. **The blessed Holy One declared, '*I thought you were gods*...'** See BT *Avodah Zarah* 5a: "Rabbi Yose said, 'Israel accepted the Torah only so the Angel of Death would have no dominion over them, as is said: *I thought you were gods, children of the Most High, all of you*, but now that you have acted corruptly, *you will surely die like* אדם (*adam*), *humans*.'" See *Mekhilta, Baḥodesh* 9.

276. **Then why should he die?** Why should one who engages in Torah ever die?

277. **not overpowered by him...** One who is devoted to Torah does not die at the hands of the serpent, manifesting as the Angel of Death; rather, he is killed compassionately by God. See BT *Bava Batra* 17a: "Over six the Angel of Death had no dominion: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."

278. **Such a one is called *living... Benayahu son of Yehoyada*...** Benayahu was a loyal follower of King David. See BT *Berakhot* 18a–b: "Rabbi Ḥiyya said..., 'The righteous are called "living" even in their death, as is said: *Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of a living man*....Do you mean to say that all other people are sons of dead men? Rather, *son of a living man*, for even in his death he was called *living*.'"

See Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Tsedeq*, 7a; *Zohar* 1:6a, 136a, 164a.

279. **will not be prosecuted in that world at all** See BT *Ḥagigah* 27a: "Rabbi Abbahu said in the name of Rabbi El'azar, 'The fire of Hell has no power over scholars.'"

280. ***He had not even finished speaking…*** The subject is Abraham's servant, who is standing by the well, praying for God's help on his mission to find a wife for Isaac.

281. ***Came out*—the verse should read: *came*** Since Rebekah came to the well. See Genesis 29:6.

282. **spelled with a ה (*he*)** The expression העינה (*ha-aynah*), *to the spring*, with the final, locative *he*, could have been worded: אל העין (*el ha-ayin*).

283. **Miriam's well manifested… and the water rose toward her** The ה (*he*) alludes to *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the final *he* of יהוה (*YHVH*) and by Miriam's well.

On Miriam's well, see BT *Ta'anit* 9a: "Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Yehudah says, '… A well [miraculously accompanied Israel in the desert] for the merit of Miriam…. When Miriam died, the well disappeared, as is said: *Miriam died there*, and immediately afterwards: *There was no water for the community* (Numbers 20:2).'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 60:5: "All the women went down and filled their pitchers from the spring, but as for her [Rebekah], as soon as the water saw her, it rose. The blessed Holy One said to her, 'You have provided a sign for your descendants. Just as the water rose the moment it saw you, so with your descendants: as soon as the well sees them, it will immediately rise.' So it is written: *Then Israel sang this song: Rise, O well! Sing to it!* (Numbers 21:17)."

284. ***coming out to draw water*** The full verse reads: *Here I am, standing by the spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water*.

285. **Why *coming out* and not *going* or *coming*?** Coming out of where?

286. **concealed all day long** Staying at home modestly.

287. **took it as a sign** That among such modest women he would find a fitting wife for Isaac.

288. **The very moment Isaac reached afternoon prayer** Back in the land of Canaan.

289. **the moment Isaac reached afternoon prayer once again…** Shortly later, as the servant and Rebekah arrived in Canaan on camel. See Genesis 24:63: *Isaac went out* לשוח (*la-suaḥ*), *to meditate* [or: *stroll*], *in the field as evening turned. He raised his eyes and saw, and here were camels coming!*

Traditionally this verse is cited to prove that Isaac instituted the afternoon prayer. See BT *Berakhot* 26b: "Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Ḥanina said, 'The patriarchs instituted the prayers.'… Abraham instituted the morning prayer…. Isaac instituted the afternoon prayer, as is said: *Isaac went out to meditate in the field as evening turned*…. Jacob instituted the evening prayer." See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 16.

290. **so that each would appear in its essential site, fittingly** Isaac symbolizes the passion of *Gevurah*, while Rebekah symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who tends toward *Gevurah*. Both *sefirot* are linked with evening, their time of union.

291. **written mystery: *a spring of gardens, a well of living waters*** The flow of emanation, culminating in *Shekhinah*.

292. **Rabbi Shim'on was coming to Tiberias** According to rabbinic tradition, Rabbi Shim'on purified Tiberias. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 79:6; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 11:16; JT *Shevi'it* 9:1, 38d; BT *Shabbat* 33b–34a; *Zohar* 2:37a; 3:72b; *ZḤ* 16a (*MhN*).

293. **coming from Cappadocia** The journey from eastern Asia Minor to Palestine recurs frequently in the *Zohar* and usually includes an encounter with some surprising character. See 1:69b, 138a (*MhN*), 160a, 197b,

223a; 2:31a, 38b, 80b, 86a; 3:35a, 75b, 221b; *ZḤ* 22a (*MhN*).

The itinerary seems to be intentionally fantastic, though perhaps the author(s) imagined that Cappadocia was a Galilean village near Sepphoris, based on the phrase "Cappadocians of Sepphoris" in JT *Shevi'it* 9:5, 39a. According to a dream interpretation in *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:12, Cappadocia is not far at all from Palestine. Cappadocia figures prominently in M *Ketubbot* 13:11 and BT *Ketubbot* nob, while Cappadocia and Lydda are linked in *Tosefta, Yevamot* 4:5 and BT *Yevamot* 25b.

See Scholem, in *Zion* (*Me'assef*) 1 (1926): 40–46 (and the appended note by S. Klein, 56); idem, *Major Trends*, 169; idem, *Kabbalah*, 222; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:63–64.

294. **amphitheater** טיטריה (*Titreih*), "His theater," derived from the Greek *theatron*, "theater." In BT *Megillah* 6a, Rabbi Yose son of Ḥanina refers to "the theaters and circuses of Edom [the Roman Empire], in which princes of Judah are destined to teach Torah publicly." See *Rut Rabbah* (ed. Lerner) 2:22: "It is not Israel's custom to attend theaters or circuses, but rather synagogues and houses of study."

295. **companions have voted...** The rabbinic authorities in Cappadocia have discussed and voted on certain matters relating to prayer and have sent me to Rabbi Shim'on to hear his view.

296. **while praying, a person should let nothing interpose...** See BT *Berakhot* 5b. The verse in Isaiah reads: *Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed*. See *Zohar* 1:11a, 228a–b; 2:44a, 133a; 3:260a–b.

297. **forbidden to pass within four cubits of one who is praying** See BT *Berakhot* 27a, 31b.

298. **four cubits in every direction except in front of him** Since in front of him, as already stated, nothing can

interpose at any distance between him and the wall. See *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 102.

299. **one should not pray behind his teacher…** See BT *Berakhot* 27a—b: “Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, ‘One should never pray next to his teacher or behind his teacher.’… Rabbi Eli’ezer says, ‘One who prays behind his teacher… causes *Shekhinah* to depart from Israel.’”

300. **He opened, saying** Rabbi Shim’on offers a kabbalistic interpretation of the halakhic rulings.

301. **Why שמעה (*shim’ah*) and not שמע (*shema*)?** Why the additional letter ה (*he*)?

302. **sometimes *shema*, for the male; sometimes *shim’ah*, for the female** The additional ה (*he*), often a female marker, alludes to the divine female, *Shekhinah*, who is also symbolized by the final letter of the name יהוה (*YHVH*). The shorter form, שמע (*shema*), without the ה (*he*), indicates the male aspect of God, *Tif’eret*.

303. ***Shim’ah, Hear, O YHVH, what is just! …*** *Shekhinah* is also known as *just* or Justice.

304. ***Shema, Hear, O YHVH!… Hear, O my son!… Be silent… and hear!*** These three verses allude to *Tif’eret*, who is known as *YHVH*, son (of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*), and *Israel*. The verse from Deuteronomy reads: *Be silent and hear, O Israel!*

305. **this rung receives all prayers…, weaving them into a wreath…** See *Shemot Rabbah* 21:4: “Rabbi Pinḥas said in the name of Rabbi Me’ir, and Rabbi Yirmeyah said in the name of Rabbi Abba, ‘When Israel pray, you do not find them all praying as one, but rather each assembly prays on its own, one after the other. When they have all finished, the angel appointed over prayers gathers all the prayers offered in all the synagogues and weaves them into wreaths, which he places on the head of the blessed Holy One.’”

Midrash Tehillim 88:2 includes this teaching, along with the proof-text and divine title used here in the *Zohar:*

“Blessings upon the head of the righteous one, Vitality of the Worlds.” See *Zohar* 1:162a. On the various senses of the title “Vitality of the Worlds,” see Daniel 12:7; *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 16; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:5; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §275; *Zohar* 1:135b, 164a, 167b.

In BT *Ḥagigah* 13b, it is reported that the angel Sandalfon “stands behind the Chariot, binding crowns for his Lord.” See *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *ve-qosher; Pesiqta Rabbati* 20; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 495; *Zohar* 1:37b, 167b; 2:58a, 146b, 202b, 209a, 245b–246a (*Heikh*); Recanati on Genesis 19:27, 26a; Green, *Keter*, 37–38.

Here, *Shekhinah* is the rung who receives all prayers and weaves them into a wreath, which She places on the head of *Yesod*, known as Righteous One, Vitality of the Worlds. He channels the vivifying flow of emanation below.

This teaching constitutes a mystical reason for the rule that one who is praying should let nothing interpose between himself and the wall, since “wall” symbolizes *Shekhinah*, standing and waiting to receive all prayers. See *Zohar* 1:228a–b; 3:260b.

306. ***Their cry rose up to God*** The verse continues: *from the bondage*.

307. **raising one’s eyes** Reflecting the minority view cited in BT *Yevamot* 105b: “Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Shim’on son of Rabi were sitting. One of them opened, saying, ‘One who prays must direct his eyes below….’ The other said, ‘His eyes should be directed above….’ Meanwhile they were joined by Rabbi Yishma’el son of Rabbi Yose, who asked, ‘In what are you engaged?’ They replied, ‘In the subject of prayer.’ He said to them, ‘My father said, “One who prays should direct his eyes below and his heart above.”’”

See Rashi on BT *Berakhot* 34b, s.v. *ḥalonot; Turei Zahav, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 95; *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Margaliot, par. 18; *Zohar* 3:260b.

308. ***At my tears!*** The verse reads: *Do not keep silent at my tears!*

309. **No gate can withstand them; tears never return unfulfilled** See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 59a: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the gates of prayer have been locked.... Yet even though the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears are not, as is said: *Hear my prayer, O YHVH; give ear to my cry; do not keep silent at my tears!*'"

On the phrase "never return unfulfilled," see Isaiah 55:11; BT *Berakhot* 32b; *Kallah Rabbati* 3:1; *Devarim Rabbah* 2:12.

310. **three rungs: prayer, cry, tears** Corresponding to *Shekhinah*, *Yesod*, and the triad of *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*. See *ZḤ* 80a (*MhN, Rut*)

311. **Corresponding to these, three others: *For I am a stranger*...** The verse reads: *For I am a stranger with You, a sojourner, like all my fathers*. גר (*Ger*), *A stranger*, symbolizes *Shekhinah*, site of all גרים (*gerim*), "converts." *A sojourner* symbolizes *Yesod*, a deeper stage of the sefirotic realm. *My fathers* indicates the patriarchs, symbolizing the triad of *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

312. **Human prayer is recited standing** The central prayer consisting of nineteen blessings is recited standing and is known as *amidah* ("standing").

313. **one sitting, one standing** The *amidah* is preceded by an earlier set of prayers, which are recited sitting. See *Zohar* 2:132a.

314. **תפלה (*tefillah*), phylactery, of the hand and *tefillah* of the head...** The word תפלה (*tefillah*) means both "prayer" and "phylactery." The *tefillin* ("phylacteries") consist of two black leather boxes containing passages from the Torah (Exodus 13:1–10, 11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21) written on parchment. They are bound by black leather straps on the left arm and on the head, and are worn during weekday morning services. Each of the biblical

passages indicates that the Israelites should place a sign upon their hand and a frontlet (or "reminder") between their eyes. In the *Zohar* the two *tefillin* symbolize two sefirotic rungs: *Shekhinah* and *Tif'eret*.

The notion that the *tefillah* of the hand should be put on while sitting and the *tefillah* of the head while standing is cited in Jacob Landau's halakhic work *Ha-Agur* (§84) as one of three rulings from the *Zohar* that appear in no early extant halakhic source.

315. **corresponding to day and night** Symbolizing *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

316. **sitting prayer corresponds to *tefillah* of the hand, adorning Her...** Wrapping the straps around the arm and hand symbolizes the adorning of *Shekhinah* (which takes place during the sitting prayer) in preparation for Her union with *Tif'eret* (which takes place during the silent standing prayer). See *Zohar* 3:120b.

317. **'Creator of ministering angels... and the Ophanim**...' From the "sitting prayer." The Ophanim first appear in Ezekiel 1 as "wheels" bearing the divine throne-chariot. Later they become a class of angels.

318. **Supernal King** *Tif'eret*.

319. **we rise in the presence of the Supernal King** Rising for *amidah*, the "standing" prayer.

320. **So one should not pause between 'redemption' and prayer** "Redemption" is the final blessing of the sitting prayer, which concludes: "Blessed are You, *YHVH*, who has redeemed Israel." According to BT *Berakhot* 4b, 9b, there should be no pause between this blessing and the beginning of the standing prayer. See *Zohar* 2:156a.

321. **four cubits for his prayer** See BT *Berakhot* 31b: "Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi said, '... It is forbidden to sit within four cubits of [one reciting the standing] prayer.'" Cf. ibid., 27a; above, page 241.

322. **court…eyebrow…** סורטא (*Surta*). This neologism has several possible connotations. One is “court, camp,” based on סרטיא (*seratya*), derived from the Greek *strateia*, “campaign,” and *stratopedon*, “camp.” Another is “eyebrow,” apparently deriving from סטרא (*sitra*), “fold, side” (BT *Niddah* 56b). See *Zohar* 3:130a (*IR*); and 3:63b: “the *surta* over the eye is covered with many hairs.” A third conceivable connotation is “band” for measuring, based on the Hebrew סרט (*seret*), “strip, ribbon.” See also *Tosefta, Shabbat* 11:6 (סרטה [*sirtah*], “incision, mark”); *Bereshit Rabbah* 33:7; *ZḤ* 1b (*SO*).

Here, perhaps, Rabbi Shim’on combines two motifs. One originates in BT *Berakhot* 8a: “Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Ammi said in the name of Ulla, ‘Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the blessed Holy One has nothing in His world but four cubits of law.’” The person praying stands in the presence of God and acquires the divine space of four cubits.

The other motif is the detailed measurements of the divine body recorded in the early mystical text *Shi’ur Qomah* (“Measure of the Stature”). See *Zohar* 1:24b (*TZ*), 36a; 2:56b, 175b–176a. Among the many limbs and features measured is the divine eyebrow. See Schäfer, *Synapse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §699: “His eyebrows are 31,000 [parasangs].” On the relation between parasangs and cubits, see §950: “Each parasang is three miles, each mile is 10,000 cubits, each cubit is two spans—measured according to His span, which spans the universe.”

Closely related to this motif is the connotation of a measuring “band,” which suggests the image of קו המדה (*qav ha-middah*), the “line of measure,” which gauges the *sefirot*—the divine limbs. The measuring of four cubits for prayer parallels the divine measure.

See Jeremiah 31:38; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 89–90; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim*

Nekhoḥim, 113; *Zohar* 1:15a, 18b; 2:233a–b, 258a; *ZḤ* 56d–58d (*QhM*); *TZ* 18, 37b.

323. **Whatever proceeds on the side of the male…** Such as the *amidah*, which symbolizes the masculine divine powers. See *Zohar* 2:133a, 183a.

324. **when one bows… and when one stands erect…** Every blessing opens with the formula: "Blessed are You, *YHVH…*" When reciting the first and penultimate blessings of the *amidah*, one bows at the word "Blessed" and stands erect at the Name, *YHVH*. See BT *Berakhot* 12a, 34a; *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 113:1, 7.

325. **demonstrating the superiority of male over female** "Blessed" symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who receives blessing from *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the Name, *YHVH*. She is dependent upon Him. See *Zohar* 3:271b.

326. **One should not pray behind his teacher** See BT *Berakhot* 27a–b, cited above, page 241.

327. ***et* encompassing the obligation to be in awe of one's teacher…** Grammatically, the accusative particle את (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when *et* appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b: "Rabbi Akiva came and taught: 'את יהוה (*Et YHVH*) *your God you shall hold in awe*—including scholars.'"

See M *Avot* 4:12; BT *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:112a–b, 247a; 2:90a, 135b.

328. **Isaac… instituted afternoon prayer … Abraham… morning prayer…** See BT *Berakhot* 26b: "Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Ḥanina said, 'The patriarchs instituted the prayers.'…Abraham instituted the morning prayer;… Isaac, the afternoon prayer;… Jacob, the evening prayer."

Abraham's rung is *Ḥesed;* Isaac's, *Gevurah*. See above, page 240; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 66.

329. **Now, if you say 'until dark'** That day extends until dark.

330. ***Woe to us, for the day is fading, shadows of evening spread!*** The verse opens: *Prepare for battle against her! Arise, let us attack at noon!* Rabbi Shim'on concludes that once noon passes, *the day is fading, shadows of evening spread*.

331. ***The day is fading… Ḥesed; shadows of evening…* severe Judgment** Morning is characterized by divine grace; afternoon, by *Gevurah*, also known as *Din* ("Judgment").

See *Zohar* 1:182b; 2:21a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 67.

332. **Then the Sanctuary was destroyed and the Temple was burned** See BT *Ta'anit* 29a: "On the seventh [of Av] the heathens [the Babylonians] entered the Temple, ate there, and desecrated it throughout the seventh and eighth. Toward dusk on the ninth, they set fire to it, and it continued burning all that day, as is said: *Woe to us, for the day is fading, shadows of evening spread!*" See *Zohar* 1:230a.

333. **one should be conscientious about afternoon prayer…** To assuage the harshness of Judgment. See BT *Berakhot* 6b; *Zohar* 1:182b, 230a; 2:36b; 3:64b.

334. **Jacob instituted evening prayer, arraying Her…** Jacob, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, transmits the flow of emanation to *Shekhinah*, symbolized by evening prayer. See *Zohar* 1:163a.

335. **ו (*vav*) adorned ה (*he*); *he* was nourished by *vav*** In the name יהוה (*YHVH*), the letter ו (*vav*), whose numerical value is six, symbolizes *Tif'eret* and the five *sefirot* surrounding Him, while the final ה (*he*), often a feminine marker, symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

336. **She has no light of Her own at all** Rather, *Shekhinah* receives and reflects the light of *Tif'eret*. The

expression derives from a medieval astronomic description of the moon.

See Radak on Genesis 1:16; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 338; idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 381; *Zohar* 1:20a, 31a, 181a, 238a; 2:43a, 142a, 218b.

337. **So evening prayer is optional** See the discussion in BT *Berakhot* 27b; *Zohar* 1:229b; 2:130a, 162a.

338. **already included in daytime prayer in order to shine** Because evening prayer symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who has no light of Her own, it is included in morning and afternoon prayer, symbolizing (respectively) *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, who provide illumination.

339. **while now is not the time** Light is unavailable at night.

340. **when the blessed Holy One delights with the righteous…** At midnight God delights in the souls of the righteous in the Garden of Eden, and those who study Torah here below partake of the celestial joy. See Psalms 119:62; and BT *Berakhot* 3b: "Rabbi Shim'on the Ḥasid said, 'There was a harp suspended above [King] David's bed. As soon as midnight arrived, a north wind came and blew upon it, and it played by itself. He immediately arose and engaged in Torah until the break of dawn.'"

In the *Zohar* this legendary custom is expanded into a ritual: all kabbalists are expected to rise at midnight and adorn *Shekhinah* with words of Torah and song in preparation for Her union with *Tif'eret*. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 146–50. This parallels the midnight vigil, common among Christian monks from early medieval times. In *Zohar* 3:119a, Rabbi Yehudah alludes to the Christian practice: "I have seen something similar among the nations of the world."

See *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 3:3, 111b; *Aggadat Bereshit 23.5*; BT *Sanhedrin* 102a; 2 Enoch 8:3; *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:138); *Zohar* 1:10b, 72a, 77a, 82b, 92a–

b, 136b, 178b, 231b; 2:46a, 130a–b, 136a, 173b, 195b–196a 3:21b–22b, 52b, 193a; *ZḤ* 13c (*MhN*). Cf. Matthew 25:6.

341. ***Evening, morning, and noon…*** The verse continues: *I meditate and moan*. See BT *Berakhot* 31a; *Midrash Tehillim* 55:2; *Zohar* 2:129b.

342. ***At night His song is with me…*** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Resh Lakish said, 'Whoever engages in Torah at night, the blessed Holy One emanates a thread of grace upon him by day, as is said: *By day YHVH directs His grace*. Why? Because *at night His song is with me*.'" *His song* is the song of Torah.

See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 3:13; *Zohar* 1:82b, 92a, 178b, 194b; 2:149a.

343. **Great Assembly** A spiritual and legislative institution of the post-prophetic era.

344. **instituted the prayers corresponding to the continual daily offerings** See BT *Berakhot* 26b: "Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Ḥanina said, 'The prayers were instituted by the patriarchs.' Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi said, 'The prayers were instituted corresponding to the daily offerings.'"

345. **coinciding with the times of prayer** Coinciding with the times of morning and afternoon prayer.

346. **But originally the patriarchs instituted these prayers** See BT *Berakhot* 26b: "The patriarchs instituted the prayers, and the Rabbis found a basis for them in the offerings."

347. **The ones instituted by Abraham and Isaac** Morning and afternoon prayer.

348. **the one instituted by Jacob** Evening prayer.

349. **Glory of the Patriarchs** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:1: "Rabbi Pinḥas said in the name of Rabbi Re'uven, '… The chosen of the patriarchs is Jacob, as is said: *For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself* (Psalms 135:4).'"

Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who harmonizes and completes the polar opposites, *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, symbolized by Abraham and Isaac.

See *Zohar* 1:119b, 144b, 150a, 152a (*ST*), 163b, 171b, 172b, 173b, 180a, 207a; 2:23a.

350. **This has already been explained** Above, pages 246–47.

351. **These two times of prayer are intended solely to unite Jacob…** By reciting the morning and afternoon prayers, one stimulates *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, which unite *Tif'eret* —symbolized by Jacob—with *Shekhinah*.

352. **once Woman is placed between two arms and joined with Body** That is, once *Shekhinah* (the divine feminine) is embraced by *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah* (the right and left arms of God) and united with *Tif'eret* (the trunk of the divine body).

353. **words of Body and Woman are whispered, not recited** During their intimate union, no words should be recited aloud, disturbing them.

354. **Jacob performs on high** The verb משמש (*meshammesh*) means "performs, ministers." A similar tradition concerning Moses is recorded in BT *Sotah* 13b: "Some say that Moses never died. Here is written: *There he* [Moses] *died* (Deuteronomy 34:5), and there is written: *He was there with YHVH* (Exodus 34:28). Just as in the latter passage it means standing and ministering, so here it means standing and ministering."

355. ***You are on high*** *You,* the second person, alludes to *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence who is encountered directly, as opposed to the more hidden realm of *Binah*, known as *He*. The verse in Psalms equates *You* with *on high*, so the latter also refers to *Shekhinah;* and the invented tradition "Jacob performs on high" means that Jacob performs with *Shekhinah*. Here the verb משמש (*meshammesh*), "performs," has an erotic connotation. See *Zohar* 1:21b. For other interpretations, see *OḤ, KP*.

356. **fathomers** ידעי מדין (*Yade'ei middin*), "Those who know *middin*," apparently deriving from מדד (*mdd*), "to measure." See Judges 5:10: *you who sit on middin*, where the word is variously rendered as "[extended, wide] carpets, blankets" or—based on דין (*din*), "judgment"—"the judgment seat." See BT *Eruvin* 54b: "It was taught at the school of Rav Anan: What is the meaning of the verse … *you who sit on middin*?… you who render judgment in absolute truth."

Here the expression may allude to "the measure of the [divine] stature," mentioned above, note 322. See Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §952: "Whoever knows this שיעור (*shi'ur*), measure, of our Creator …, concealed from creatures, is assured of life in the world that is coming."

See *Zohar* 1:241b; 2:71b, 130b, 161a; *ZḤ* 73b, 74b (*ShS*), 106b (*Tiq*).

357. **kissed his hands** A frequent sign of veneration and thanks among the Companions of the *Zohar*.

See 1:83b, 142a, 250b; 2:21b, 23b, 62a, 68a, 87a, 121b, 193b; 3:31a, 57b, 65b, 73b, 119b, 121a, 221b, 296b (*IZ*); *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:2; BT *Berakhot* 8b; Bacher, "Le baisement des mains dans le Zohar."

358. ***Isaac brought her to the tent, Sarah his mother*** The verse continues: *He took Rebekah as his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother*.

359. **This verse is difficult… Why האהלה (*ha-ohelah*)?** If the word is part of a construct phrase (*to the tent of Sarah his mother*), then the initial ה (*he*) is a superfluous definite article, while the final, locative ה (*he*) is awkward; more natural would be the preposition ל (*le*), *to*. See Ibn Ezra, ad loc.

360. **Because *Shekhinah* returned there** *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine, is symbolized by the letter ה (*he*), which is the final letter of יהוה (*YHVH*) and often a feminine marker.

361. **A lamp would burn… *Sarah his mother*—resembling Sarah…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 60:16: "*Isaac brought her to the tent, Sarah his mother*.… As long as

Sarah existed… the lamp would burn in her tent from one Sabbath eve until the next. As soon as she died, it went out. As soon as Rebekah arrived, it returned. When he saw her acting like his mother, handling her dough in purity and separating a portion in purity, immediately, *Isaac brought her to the tent—Sarah his mother!*" See *Zohar* 1:50a.

Rabbi Yose adopts the hyperliteral reading of the midrash: *Isaac brought her to the tent* [and realized she was just like] *Sarah his mother!*

362. **Isaac's image was identical with Abraham's…** See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 87a: "Rabbi Levi said, 'On the day that Abraham weaned his son Isaac, he held a great feast. All the nations of the world… mocked him, saying, "Even if Sarah could give birth at the age of ninety, could Abraham engender at the age of a hundred?" Immediately the features of Isaac's face changed and resembled Abraham's. They all exclaimed: *Abraham engendered Isaac!* (Genesis 25:19).'" See *Zohar* 1:135a.

363. **Rebekah's image was precisely Sarah's; so, *Sarah his mother*, literally!** See Rashi, ad loc.

364. **even though Sarah died, her image never departed from the house** Each human being has, in addition to soul and body, an "image" or ethereal body. The soul is clothed in this image before descending to earth, retains it while in the physical body until shortly before death, and then regains it afterwards.

See *Zohar* 1:90b–91a, 131a, 220a; 3:43a–b, 104a–b; Scholem, in *Tarbiz* 24 (1955): 293–95; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158–59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead, 2.51–73;* Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:770–73. Cf. Rashi on BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, s.v. *ve-ruḥot unshamot*.

365. **which is why the verse does not read *after his mother's death*** The elliptical wording, *Isaac was comforted after his mother*, enables Rabbi El'azar to understand the final phrase as meaning not "after his mother's death" but "after his mother's appearance."

366. **Arousal of love of male toward female quickens only on the left** Left symbolizes *Gevurah*, the *sefirah* of "power" and passion, which stimulates the *sefirah* of *Ḥesed* on the right. This dynamic manifests both in human and divine eros.

367. ***His left hand beneath my head*** The verse continues: *his right embracing me*. From a sefirotic perspective, these words are spoken by *Shekhinah*, describing Her divine partner.

368. **Darkness and night are as one** Darkness symbolizes *Gevurah;* night, *Shekhinah*. Both manifest *Din* ("Judgment") and are intimately linked.

See *Zohar* 1:112b, 136a, 142a, 168b.

369. **of him is not written *and he loved her*, rather of Isaac** Abraham symbolizes *Ḥesed;* Isaac, *Gevurah*. Since arousal of love begins with *Gevurah*, it is fitting that this phrase refer to Isaac and Rebekah, not Abraham and Sarah.

370. **Now, you might say *Jacob loved Rachel*!** If love depends on Isaac's *sefirah, Gevurah*, why should Jacob's love be specified, since he symbolizes *Tif'eret*?.

371. **expressed by the aspect of Isaac within him** Jacob, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, harmonized the polar opposites *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*. His love for Rachel was stimulated by *Gevurah*.

372. **When Abraham saw Rebekah, he embraced her... but Isaac...** Their levels of intimacy with Rebekah, who symbolizes *Shekhinah*, reflect their roles in the sefirotic romance. Abraham (symbolizing *Ḥesed*, the divine right hand) embraced Rebekah, whereas Isaac (symbolizing *Gevurah*, the divine left hand) grasped her passionately.

373. **Later, Jacob came and performed in bed, engendering twelve tribes...** By uniting with his wives, Jacob, who symbolizes *Tif'eret*, consummated the union with *Shekhinah*. He is called "master of the house," husband of *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:21b, 138b, 236b; 3:187b.

374. **All the patriarchs traced one mystery … performing with four women** Their fourfold union symbolized the four camps of angels surrounding *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 2:256b (*Heikh*).

375. ***concubines*, two, totaling four** The plural (*concubines*) implies at least two, which, added to Sarah and Hagar, comes to four.

376. **Isaac with mystery of four from the aspect of Rebekah…** Scripture only records one wife for Isaac, but Rabbi Shim'on interprets the wording of this verse as implying four wives or four aspects of his one wife, Rebekah.

377. **Jacob had four women** Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah.

378. **Abraham and Isaac each performed with one woman…** Only Sarah and Rebekah derived from holiness, not Hagar or the concubines.

379. **Corresponding to both… Jacob had four women in two portions** Jacob completed the patriarchal triad and encompassed both Abraham and Isaac—each of whose sefirotic qualities reflects the other, totaling four aspects: *Ḥesed, Ḥesed-Gevurah, Gevurah, Gevurah-Ḥesed*. Jacob's quartet of wives corresponds to this tetrad.

380. **Words have ascended to their site!** The sublime meaning of the words of Scripture has been demonstrated.

381. **Keturah is identical with Hagar** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 61:4; *Tanḥuma, Ḥayyei Sarah* 8; *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), Genesis 25:1; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 30.

382. **filthy idols** גלולי (*Gillulei*), "Idols," traditionally connected with גלל (*galal*), "dung, dung ball." See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 38; the medieval dictionaries of Jonah ibn Janaḥ and David Kimḥi.

383. **adorned ואתקטירת (*ve-itqetirat*), and perfumed, with worthy deeds** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 30: "Her

name was קטורה (*Qeturah*), for she was מקוטרת (*mequtteret*), perfumed, with all kinds of spices. Alternatively, *Qeturah*, for her deeds were as fine as קטורת (*qetoret*), incense."

The root קטר (*qtr*) can also mean "wreathe, tie," a meaning alluded to here ("adorned") and in *Bereshit Rabbah* 61:4; *Tanḥuma, Ḥayyei Sarah* 8.

384. **change of name purges sins** See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b: "Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'Four things tear a person's verdict: charity, crying out, change of name, and change of conduct.'"

See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 2:4: "Among the ways of *teshuvah* ["turning back" to God] are… changing one's name, by which one says: 'I am someone else—no longer that person who did those deeds.'"

See Isaiah 65:15; Naḥmanides on Numbers 10:29.

385. ***Once again Abraham*** The verse continues: *took a wife*.

386. **he coupled with her once** Abraham coupled with Hagar.

387. **banishing her afterward on account of Ishmael** See Genesis 21:9–14; *Zohar* 1:118b.

388. **Later, *once again* as before, another time…** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 30.

389. ***Isaac brought her to the tent—Sarah*** his mother The verse continues: *He took Rebekah as his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother*.

390. **the image of Sarah manifested** See above, pages 249–50.

391. **so that a slave-girl would not supplant her mistress** So Hagar would not supplant Sarah. The expression derives from Proverbs 30:21–23. See above, pages 206–7, 236–37; *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Wistinetzki, par. 1168.

392. ***all that he had*… mystery of supernal faith…** Abraham conveyed to Isaac his knowledge of the full sefirotic spectrum, the mystery of faith, so that Isaac could

cleave to his destined *sefirah, Gevurah*. See *Zohar* 1:100b, 223a. Elsewhere in the *Zohar* the words את כל אשר (*et kol asher*), *all that*, refer respectively to *Shekhinah, Yesod*, and *Binah*.

393. **Here fire was completed by water** Fire, symbolizing Isaac and *Gevurah*, was completed by water, symbolizing Abraham and *Ḥesed*.

See *Zohar* 1:103b–104a, 118b, 119b, 164b.

394. **At first, fire embraced by water…** By binding his son on the altar, Abraham, symbolized by water, embraced the fire of Isaac. This apparently harsh act manifested the quality of *Din* ("Judgment"), another name for *Gevurah*. See above, pages 192–95.

395. ***To the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts*** The verse continues: *while he was still alive, and he sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the East*.

396. **What are *gifts*? Aspects of low rungs…** See BT *Sanhedrin* 91a: "*To the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts*… What is the meaning of *gifts*? Rabbi Yirmeyah son of Abba said, 'This teaches that he transmitted to them a name of defilement [by which to conjure demons and sorcery].'"

See *Zohar* 1:100b, 223a; Judah ben Barzillai, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 159.

397. **to complete rungs so that Isaac would ascend on high…** To complete the manifestation of all powers, both pure and impure, at which point Isaac ascends and prevails over all. It is fitting that Isaac, symbolizing, *Gevurah*, rule over demonic powers stemming from the left side.

398. ***The sons of his concubines*—sons of Keturah…** The plural (*concubines*) refers to both stages of her relationship with Abraham, first as Hagar and then as Keturah.

399. ***Concubines*, literally!** According to Rabbi Ḥiyya, the plural refers to two separate concubines, who together

with Hagar (also known as Keturah) and Sarah, make a total of four women for Abraham. See above, page 251.

400. **so that they would not antagonize him later** That is, so that the concubines' sons would not antagonize Isaac.

401. **supernal, severe Judgment** The *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment") or *Gevurah*.

402. ***land of the East*—domain of... impure witchcraft** The East is famous as a realm of astrology and magic.

See *Qohelet Rabbah* on 7:23; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 4:3; *Tanḥuma, Ḥuqqat* 6; Judah ben Barzillai, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 159; Naḥmanides, introduction to Commentary on the Torah, and on Deuteronomy 18:10; *Zohar* 1:99b, 223a–b.

403. **in the mountains of the East dwell those who teach witchcraft...** Chief among them Uzza and Azael—two angels who opposed the creation of Adam and Eve, fell from heaven, and were attracted by *the daughters of men* (Genesis 6:2). They were punished by being bound in chains of iron in the mountains of darkness, from where they still manage to wreak havoc, teaching sorcery to humans.

See 1 Enoch 6–8; Jubilees 5; BT *Yoma* 67b; *Aggadat Bereshit*, intro, 39; *Midrash Avkir*, 7 (cited in *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Genesis, 44); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 22; *Zohar* 1:9b, 23a (*TZ*), 37a, 37a (*Tos*), 58a, 126a; 3:208a–b, 212a–b; *ZḤ* 81a–b (*MhN, Rut*).

404. **Laban, Beor, Balaam, his sons** Laban was Rebekah's brother. Beor was the father of Balaam the sorcerer. Balaam's sons were the magicians Jannes and Jambres.

On Laban's powers of witchcraft, see Genesis 30:27; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and *Sekhel Tov*, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:139b, 166b–167b.

According to one view, Laban was the father of Beor and thus the grandfather of Balaam. See *Tanḥuma, Balaq*

12; *Sefer ha-Yashar, Vayetse* , 142; *Zohar* 1:166b. Cf. above, page 217; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:303, n. 229; 6:123, n. 722.

On Jannes and Jambres, see BT *Menaḥot* 85a; *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 19; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 1:15; 7:11; Numbers 22:22; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Exodus, 168, 176; *Zohar* 2:191a, 192a; 3:194a.

405. ***Who gave up Jacob for spoil…*** The verse continues: *and Israel to plunderers? Was it not YHVH, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk and whose Torah they would not obey?*

406. **Ever since the day the Temple was destroyed…** See M *Sotah* 9:12: "Rabban Shi'mon son of Gamliel says in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a, 'Ever since the day the Temple was destroyed, there is no day without a curse, dew has not descended for blessing, and flavor has departed from fruit.'" See *Zohar* 1:55b, 70b; 3:74b.

407. **withheld, as it were, above and below** Withheld not only from the worlds below but even within the sefirotic realm. See *Zohar* 3:74b.

408. **all those other, lower rungs are empowered** … Without a flow of blessing, demonic powers fill the vacuum and foreign nations rule over Israel.

409. **Having said this, why *against whom we have sinned*?** Logically, Jacob's actions should be worded not in the second person but in the third person: *against whom they have sinned*.

410. ***Shekhinah* sought to… accompany them in exile** See BT *Megillah* 29a: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai says, 'Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them.…When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them.… And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them.'" See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 14.

411. **Assembly of Israel** כנסת ישראל (*Keneset Yisra'el*). In rabbinic Hebrew this phrase denotes the people of Israel. The midrash on the Song of Songs describes a love affair between the maiden (the earthly community of Israel) and her lover (the Holy One, blessed be He). In the *Zohar, Keneset Yisra'el* can refer to the earthly community but also (often primarily) to *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine counterpart of the people, the aspect of God most intimately connected with them. The lovers in the Song of Songs are pictured as the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

412. **Her Husband** *Tif'eret*, the blessed Holy One.

413. ***A voice is heard on a height… Rachel weeping for her children*** The verse continues: *refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more*.

In the *Zohar*, Rachel symbolizes *Shekhinah*, whose voice is heard above and below. See *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 24; *Zohar* 1:203a, 210a.

414. ***Who gave up Jacob for spoil?…*** The verse continues: *and Israel to plunderers?*

415. ***YHVH builds Jerusalem*, first; then, *He gathers the banished of Israel*** See BT *Berakhot* 49a; JT *Ma'aser Sheni* 5:2, 56a; *Tanḥuma, Noaḥ* 11; *Zohar* 1:139a (*MhN*).

1. **gazed into Torah and created it… אמון (*amon*)… אומן (*umman*)…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1: “Rabbi Osha’ya opened, *‘I was with Him as* אמון (*amon*), *a nursling*…. אמון (*amon*)—אומן (*umman*), *an artisan*. Torah says, “I was the artistic tool of the blessed Holy One.”… The blessed Holy One gazed into Torah and created the world.’”

See M *Avot* 3:14; *Zohar* 1:5a, 47a; 2:161a–b; 3:35b; Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:242–45, 266–69.

2. **If a human being is created and then proceeds to sin…** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 11.

3. **I have already prepared *teshuvah*, returning…** The possibility of returning and repenting from sin. See BT *Pesaḥim* 54a: “Seven things were created before the world was created: Torah, *teshuvah*, the Garden of Eden, Hell, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah.”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:4; *Zohar* 1:90a (*ST*); 3:69b; *ZḤ* 85a (*MhN, Rut*).

4. **If not, I will turn you back into chaos and void** See BT *Shabbat* 88a: “Resh Lakish said, ‘The blessed Holy One stipulated a condition with the works of Creation, saying to them: “If Israel accepts the Torah, you will endure. If not, I will return you to *chaos and void* (Genesis 1:2).”’”

5. **Torah stands calling out… but no one bends an ear** See *Zohar* 2:99a.

6. **smooth member** Rendering two senses of one term, שייפא (*shaifa*). Deriving from a root meaning “to smooth, rub, slip,” the word signifies “limb” in the *Zohar*, perhaps based on the Talmudic expression (BT *Sotah* 7b): על איבריה לשפא (*al eivreih le-shafa*), “each limb entered its socket”—“slipping” into place—or “… the chest.”

See *Arukh*, s.v. *shaf;* Rashi, ad loc., and on Job 33:21, citing *Ḥullin* 42b; *Zohar* 3:170a.

7. **Every single… member… corresponds to a creature…** The human being is a microcosm. See *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 3; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31; *Qohelet*

Rabbah on 1:4; *Zohar* 1:90b, 186b. Reciprocally, the world is a macroanthropos.

8. **joints, sections** פרקין (*Pirqin*), meaning both "joints" and "sections."

9. **all arrayed, becoming one body** On the Torah as a living organism or body, see Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 37; *Zohar* 2:162b, 165b; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 44–50.

Just as the human body comprises 248 members and 365 sinews, so the Torah comprises 248 positive and 365 negative commandments. See BT *Makkot* 23b; El'azar of Worms, *Peirushei Siddur ha-Tefillah*, 134.

10. **Solomon… sought to comprehend… *it is beyond me*** See BT *Yoma* 14a; *ZḤ* 7a (*MhN*).

11. **every single proverb he spoke implied *one thousand and five* meanings** See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:1: "The Rabbis say: *He spoke three thousand proverbs* on every single verse; *and his songs numbered one thousand and five*—one thousand and five reasons for every single proverb."

See BT *Eruvin* 21b; *Zohar* 2:145a; *ZḤ* 7a (*MhN*).

12. ***Who can express* גבורות (*gevurot*), *the mighty acts, of* YHVH?—Isaac…** Isaac symbolizes *Gevurah* ("Power, Might"), and he engendered both Jacob and Esau, holy and demonic, respectively.

13. **When the sun cleaves to the moon…** When *Tif'eret*, symbolized by Jacob and the sun, unites with *Shekhinah*, symbolized by Rachel and the moon, countless spiritual forces or souls issue from them.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:10; *Zohar* 1:136a, 146b, 148a, 166a; *ZḤ* 14c, 27c (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 50 (61); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 381.

14. **his image remained stamped in Isaac…** See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 87a: "Rabbi Levi said, 'On the day that Abraham weaned his son Isaac, he held a great feast. All the nations of the world… mocked him, saying, "Even if

Sarah could give birth at the age of ninety, could Abraham engender at the age of a hundred?" Immediately the features of Isaac's face changed and resembled Abraham's. They all exclaimed: *Abraham engendered Isaac!'"* See above, pages 249–50.

15. **Caesarean castle** קוסרוי (*Qusroi*), perhaps derived from the Arabic *qaṣr*, "castle, palace," or referring to Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine. The *Zohar* often employs the word קוסטרא (*qustera*), deriving from the Latin *castrum* (pl. *castra*), "castle, fortress," and one MS reads here: קסטרוי (*qasteroi*), "his castle."

16. **Why, in this case, did the blessed Holy One have to bless Isaac?** Unlike the children of Isaac and Jacob, who were blessed by their fathers.

17. **Why? So that Esau would not be blessed** If Abraham had blessed Isaac, the blessing would have extended to both of Isaac's sons, Jacob and Esau.

18. **he consigned those blessings to the blessed Holy One…** God could bless Isaac in such a way that the blessings would be inherited only by Jacob. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, nispaḥim, Vezot Haberakhah*, 446–47; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 4; *Bereshit Rabbah* 61:6.

19. לחי רואי **(*la-ḥai ro'i*)…upon which appeared the Angel of Covenant…** The word רואי (*ro'i*) derives from the root ראה (*r'h*), "to see," and implies a manifestation of *Shekhinah*. She is the Angel of Covenant who joins with *Yesod*, the divine phallus, known as Covenant. See *Zohar* 1:102b, 131b.

The translation referred to is *Targum Onqelos*, which reads here: "the well upon which appeared the Angel of Covenant."

20. **Now coupling of *Shekhinah* consorts with us!** Now that we have come together to study Torah, *Shekhinah* is joining us. See M *Avot* 3:2: "Rabbi Ḥananya son of Teradyon said, '… If two are sitting engaged in words of Torah, *Shekhinah* dwells between them.'"

See *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 69b–70a, 87a, 92b, 115b.

21. **This has already been discussed** See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:15; *Shemot Rabbah* 20:5; *Zohar* 1:132a; 3:201b, 266a, 298a.

22. ***A spring of gardens*—Abraham... Isaac... Jacob** The three patriarchs symbolize, respectively, *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

23. ***The well*—*Shekhinah*** Filled with the flow of emanation, which She conveys to the world.

24. **תי (*Ḥei*), Life of, the Worlds: Righteous One, Vitality of the Worlds...** *Yesod* is Vitality of the Worlds because He channels the vivifying flow of emanation below. On the various senses of this title, see Daniel 12:7; *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 16; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:5; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §275; *Zohar* 1:132a, 164a, 167b.

He is also known as Righteous One, based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse, which literally means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

25. **not to be separated** To ensure a continual flow of blessing to the world, *Shekhinah* and *Yesod* must remain united.

26. **He lives in two worlds...** *Yesod* draws emanation from *Binah* above and channels it to *Shekhinah* below.

27. **The moon is illumined only when seeing the sun...** *Shekhinah* is illumined only when seeing and receiving the light of *Yesod* (an extension of *Tif'eret*).

28. ***Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of a living man...*** Benayahu was a loyal follower of King David. His righteous power parallels and symbolizes that of *Yesod*.

See BT *Berakhot* 18a–b: "Rabbi Ḥiyya said..., 'The righteous are called "living" even in their death, as is said: *Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of a living man*.... Do you mean to say that all other people are sons of dead men?

Rather, *son of a living man*, for even in his death he was called *living.’”*

See Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Tsedeq*, 7a; *Zohar* 1:6a, 132a.

29. **באר (*be’er*)… בקחתו את רבקה (*be-qaḥto et Rivqah*)…** The word באר (*be’er*) consists of the initial letters of the words בקחתו את רבקה (*be-qaḥto et Rivqah*).

30. **dwelling with her… darkness with night** Isaac’s union with Rebekah enacts the union of *Gevurah* (symbolized by Isaac and darkness) with *Shekhinah* (symbolized by Rebekah and night). See *Zohar* 1:112b, 133a, 142a, 168b.

31. ***His left hand beneath my head*** From a kabbalistic perspective, these words are spoken by *Shekhinah*, describing the intimate touch of *Gevurah*, the left hand of Her divine partner. By arousing passion, *Gevurah* stimulates the union of *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*.

32. **Kiriath Arba** Hebron.

33. ***shines forth*** זרח (*Zaraḥ*), “Rise, come forth, shine.”

34. **sun illumining moon** *Tif’eret* illumining *Shekhinah*.

35. **when appearing with Her, He glows… from the supernal site…** *Tif’eret’s* union with *Shekhinah* stimulates an additional influx from His source above, *Binah*.

36. **ובא השמש (*U-va ha-shemesh*), *And the sun sets*—coupling…** The verb בא (*ba*) means “come, set, enter, unite sexually.”

37. ***Moving toward the south*** The verse continues: *circling toward the north. Round and round whirls the wind; on its rounds the wind returns*.

38. **the right, depositing its potency there** On its way to uniting with *Shekhinah*, the masculine divinity moves *toward the south*, symbolizing *Ḥesed*, the right arm.

39. ***circling toward the north*** Symbolizing *Gevurah*, the left arm.

40. **At first is written *sun*, and now *wind*, but all is one…** Both *sun* and *wind* signify *Tif’eret*. See Rashi and Ibn Ezra on Ecclesiastes 1:6; *Zohar* 3:182a.

41. **When Abraham came… When Isaac arrived…** Abraham, symbolizing *Ḥesed*, embraced *Shekhinah*, as indicated by the continuation of the verse in Song of Songs: *his right embracing me*. Isaac, symbolizing *Gevurah*, held Her more passionately. See above, page 251.

42. **When Jacob came, sun united with moon…** Jacob, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, consummated the union with *Shekhinah*. The twelve tribes descended from his sons adorned Her. See above, page 259.

43. **This verse has been established** See BT *Menaḥot* 110a.

44. **those who rise at midnight…** At midnight God delights in the souls of the righteous in the Garden of Eden, and those who study Torah here below partake of the celestial joy. See Psalms 119:62; and BT *Berakhot* 3b: "Rabbi Shim'on the Ḥasid said, 'There was a harp suspended above [King] David's bed. As soon as midnight arrived, a north wind came and blew upon it, and it played by itself. He immediately arose and engaged in Torah until the break of dawn.'"

In the *Zohar* this legendary custom is expanded into a ritual: all kabbalists are expected to rise at midnight and adorn *Shekhinah* with words of Torah and song in preparation for Her union with *Tif'eret*. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 146–50. This parallels the midnight vigil, common among Christian monks from early medieval times. In *Zohar* 3:119a, Rabbi Yehudah alludes to the Christian practice: "I have seen something similar among the nations of the world."

See *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 3:3, 111b; *Aggadat Bereshit 23:5*; BT *Sanhedrin* 102a; 2 Enoch 8:3; *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:138); *Zohar* 1:10b, 72a, 77a, 82b, 92a–b, 132b, 178b, 231b; 2:46a, 130a–b, 136a, 173b, 195b–196a; 3:12b–13a, 21b–22b, 52b, 193a; *ZḤ* 13c (*MhN*). Cf. Matthew 25:6.

45. **Rabbi Yitsḥak** Rabbi Isaac, who begins to discuss his namesake.

46. ***Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah***… The verse continues: *as his wife, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram, sister of Laban the Aramean*.

47. **Why does Scripture specify that he was *forty years old*…?** No such detail is mentioned regarding the two other patriarchs, Abraham and Jacob.

48. **Isaac encompassed North and South, fire and water** Isaac incorporated his father's *sefirah, Ḥesed* (symbolized by South and water), and his own *sefirah, Gevurah* (symbolized by North and fire). His age at the time of his marriage reflects all four symbols.

See *Zohar* 1:103b–104a, 118b, 119b, 133b, 164b.

49. **who resembled a rainbow: green, white, red** Rebekah symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who displays the colors of the sefirotic triad *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret:* white, red, and green.

On the rainbow and its colors, see Ezekiel 1:28; *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Wistinetzki, par. 1445 (ed. Margaliot, par. 484); Moses of Burgos, *Commentary on the Merkavah*, ed. Scholem, *Tarbiz* 5 (1934): 183; Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 9:13; *Zohar* 1:18b, 71b, 98b (*ST*); 3:215a; Scholem, "Colours and Their Symbolism," 69–71.

50. **She was three years old when he embraced her** The youngest legal age a female can be married. See M *Niddah* 5:4; *Seder Olam Rabbah* 1; *Soferim*, add. 1:4; Rashi on Genesis 25:20; *Tosafot, Yevamot* 61b, s.v. *ve-khen; Sekhel Tov*, Genesis 24:14.

Rebekah's three years correspond to the three colors of the rainbow.

51. **he engendered at sixty, generating fittingly…** See Genesis 25:26. When Isaac fathered Jacob he was sixty years old, symbolizing the full sextet of *sefirot* from *Ḥesed*

through *Yesod*, thereby ensuring that Jacob would be complete.

52. **consummate man** גבר שלים (*Gevar shelim*), borrowed from *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 25:27, where Jacob—in contrast to Esau the hunter—is described as תם איש (*ish tam*), "a simple [or: innocent, plain, mild, quiet, sound, wholesome] man."

53. **although she was among the wicked, she did not act like them…** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:1: "*Like a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the maidens* (Song of Songs 2:2). Rabbi Yitsḥak interpreted this verse as applying to Rebekah. *'Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as his wife, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram, sister of Laban the Aramean*. Why does Scripture state: *sister of Laban* הארמי (*ha-arami*), *the Aramean*? Hasn't it already been stated: *daughter of Bethuel the Aramean?* And why does Scripture state: *daughter of Bethuel the Aramean?* Isn't it stated: *sister of Laban the Aramean?* The reason is that the blessed Holy One said, "Her father was רמאי (*rammai*), a deceiver, and her brother was a deceiver, and the people of her place were deceivers; yet this righteous woman emerged from among them. Among them she was *like a lily among thorns.*"'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:4; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:2; Rashi on Genesis 25:20.

54. **she performed all that service for the servant** Providing water for Abraham's servant and his camels. See Genesis 24:15–20.

55. **we do not know if her actions were worthy or not** Perhaps three-year-old Rebekah was simply imitating the actions of others.

56. ***rose…*** שושנה (*Shoshanah*) probably means "lily" or "lotus" in Song of Songs, but here Rabbi Yitsḥak has in mind a rose, as is clear from the word ורדא (*varda*), "rose," at the end of the paragraph.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:2; *Zohar* 1:1a, 221a; 2:20a (*MhN*), 189b; 3:107a, 180b, 233b, 286b; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489 (lily); Joseph ibn Akhnin, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 63–65 (rose); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 183–84; *Zohorei Ya'bets*.

A Ladino translation of the verse (*The Ladino Five Scrolls*, ed. Lazar, 4–5) reads: "Commo la roza entre los espinos, ansi mi conpañera entre las dueñas."

57. ***Like a rose*—Assembly of Israel**... In the Midrash, Rabbi Yitsḥak applies this same verse to Rebekah (see above, note 53). It is also applied to Israel among the nations. Here the *Zohar's* Rabbi Yitsḥak applies it to *Shekhinah*, Assembly of Israel, who lies among the harsh forces of judgment like a rose among thorns. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:5–7; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:2; *Zohar* 3:37b, 233b.

In rabbinic Hebrew the phrase כנסת ישראל (*Keneset Yisra'el*), "Assembly of Israel," denotes the people of Israel. The midrash on the Song of Songs describes the love affair between the maiden (the earthly community of Israel) and her lover (the Holy One, blessed be He). See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:1. In the *Zohar, Keneset Yisra'el* can refer to the earthly community but also (often primarily) to *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine counterpart of the people, the aspect of God most intimately connected with them. The lovers in the Song of Songs are pictured as the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

58. **Isaac issues from the side of Abraham...** Isaac, symbolizing *Gevurah* or *Din* ("Judgment"), derives from Abraham, symbolizing *Ḥesed* ("Love"), though Isaac himself embodies Judgment.

On Abraham and *Ḥesed*, see Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*), 98a; 2:36a; 3:14a.

59. **Rebekah issues from the side of severe Judgment…** Rebekah symbolizes *Shekhinah*. Just as the divine feminine issues from *Din* and is surrounded by forces of Judgment, so Rebekah was surrounded by wicked humans. But the harsh origin of both *Shekhinah* and Rebekah is softened by the "grace" of *Ḥesed*.

See *Zohar* 2:257a–b (*Heikh*), and on the "thread of grace," BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: "Resh Lakish said, 'Whoever engages in Torah at night, the blessed Holy One emanates a thread of grace upon him by day.'"

60. **the blessed Holy One matches couples in the world** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:4, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Simon: "A matron asked Rabbi Yose, 'In how many days did the blessed Holy One create His world?' He replied, 'In six days.' 'Since then what has He been doing?' He replied, 'He sits and matches couples: this man for that woman, this woman for that man.' She said, 'If that seems difficult, I can do it!' She went and matched [her slaves], giving this woman to that man, and this man to that woman. After a while, those who had been matched starting beating one another. This woman said, 'I don't want that man!' This man said, 'I don't want that woman!' He [Rabbi Yose] said to her [the matron], 'If it seems easy to you, it is as difficult for the blessed Holy One as splitting the Red Sea!'"

See *Zohar* 1:85b, 89a, 90b, 91b; 2:101a.

61. **will be firm and sweet** יתבסם (*Yitbassam*), "Be sweetened" or "be firmly established." The root *bsm* conveys both senses.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 66:2; *Midrash Shemu'el* 26:4; *Zohar* 1:30b, 31a, 34a, 37a, 56a; 2:143a, 168a, 227a; 3:18a; N. Bronsnick, in *Sinai* 63 (1968): 81–85; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 165, 388, n. 44; idem, *Kabbalah*, 228.

62. ***Isaac entreated YHVH on behalf of his wife*** The verse continues: *because she was barren*.

63. **What does ויעתר (*va-ye'tar*) mean? He offered Him an offering…** Though Rabbi Yehudah offers a proof-text

from Samuel, he may also have in mind the Arabic verb *atr* "to slaughter for sacrifice." In Syriac, *eṭra* means "vapor, fume" of a sacrificial offering. See Ezekiel 8:11.

64. **ויעתר אלהים (*va-ye'ater Elohim*), *and God let Himself be entreated*...** This closing verse of 2 Samuel reads: ויעתר יהוה (*va-ye'ater YHVH*), *and YHVH let Himself be entreated*. Rabbi Yehudah is conflating it with an earlier verse in the same book (21:14): ויעתר אלהים (*va-ye'ater Elohim*), *and God let Himself be entreated, for the land*.

65. **Just as there an offering, so here an offering** The verse in Samuel opens: *David built an altar there to YHVH and offered ascent-offerings and peace-offerings*.

66. **fire issued from above, corresponding to fire below** The repetition of the verb alludes to a double fire: divine flame from above greeting sacrificial flames from below.

67. **streaming constellation in charge of children...** See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 28a: "Rava said, 'Life, children, and sustenance do not depend on merit but on מזלא (*mazzala*), "destiny."'"

מזלא (*Mazzala*) means "constellation, planet, planetary influence, destiny, guardian angel." In the *Zohar* it is associated with the root נזל (*nzl*), "to flow," and often refers to the flow of emanation from the world of the male, which comprises *Binah* through *Yesod*, the divine phallus. *Yesod* conveys this flow to *Shekhinah*, thereby engendering souls of the newborn.

See *Zohar* 1:43b (*Heikh*), 115a, 156b, 159b, 160b, 181a, 207b; 2:6a, 252b (*Heikh*); 3:25b, 77b, 134b (*IR*), 289a (*IZ*), 292b (*IZ*), 295b (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 193; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 65 (82); Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 12a, 37a–b, 74a, 95a.

68. **Do not read ויעתר (*va-ye'ater*)... but rather ויחתר (*va-yeḥtor*)...** See *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 25:21: "ויעתר יצחק (*Va-ye'tar Yitsḥaq*), *Isaac entreated*—like ויחתר (*va-yeḥtor*), *he dug*, because ע (*ayin*) and ח (*ḥet*) are interchangeable [both being

guttural letters]..., for he penetrated with his prayer like one digging into a wall to make an opening... ויעתר לו ה׳ (*Va-ye'ater lo YHVH*), *YHVH let Himself be entreated*, for just as Isaac our father was digging to create an opening of compassion, so the blessed Holy One was happy to create an opening for him in order to fulfill the desire of a righteous person."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:5: "Rabbi Berekhiah said in the name of Rabbi Levi, 'This may be compared to a prince who was digging through to his father to get a pound of gold: one [the king] dug from within, while the other [his son] dug from without.'"

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 24:11; 27:3; *Rut Rabbah* 5:6; *Devarim Rabbah* 2:20; BT *Sanhedrin* 103b; JT *Sanhedrin* 10:2; 28c; *Minḥat Shai* on 2 Chronicles 33:13.

69. **For twenty years Isaac waited with his wife** See Genesis 25:20, 26; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 32.

70. **since the blessed Holy One delights in prayers of the righteous...** See BT *Yevamot* 64a: "Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'Why were our ancestors barren? Because the blessed Holy One yearns for the prayers of the righteous.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 45:4; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:14.

71. **So that... holy anointing oil will increase and spread for the one in need** So that the flow of emanation will increase and reach *Shekhinah*, who is dependent on it.

72. **she was infertile, not he** According to another view, however, both Isaac and Rebekah were infertile. See BT *Yevamot* 64a; *Targum Yerushalmi, Midrash ha-Gadol, Ba'al ha-Turim*, and *Minḥat Shai* on Genesis 25:21.

73. ***on behalf of his wife*** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:5: "Isaac... said before the blessed Holy One, 'Master of the Universe! May all the children You ever grant me issue from this righteous woman.'" Alternatively, the phrase here implies: whether through this wife (Rebekah) or another.

74. **That boy, son of Rabbi Yehudah** Who had accompanied him to Rabbi Yitsḥak's house. See above, page

260.

75. **If so, why didn't Isaac love Jacob as much as Esau…** The child asks about parental love. Similar questions and answers appear in Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 47; and Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 55a–b.

76. **every species loves its own kind and is drawn to its kind** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:3; BT *Bava Qamma* 92b; *Zohar* 1:20b, 126b, 167b.

77. **quality of Isaac, severe Judgment above** Deriving from *Gevurah*, or *Din* ("Judgment"), on the left side. This *sefirah* is symbolized by Isaac and associated with the color red. See *Zohar* 3:215a.

78. **Esau, severe Judgment below, resembling his kind** Esau, deriving from *Din*, manifested severe Judgment below. See *Zohar* 1:142a, 145a.

79. ***Like Nimrod*, גבור ציד (*gibbor tsayid*), *a mighty hunter, before YHVH*** Nimrod was King of Babylonia and Assyria (see Genesis 10:8–12). He is portrayed negatively in rabbinic tradition. According to *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 2:2, 111b, the phrase here, *before YHVH*, means "in the face of *YHVH*," implying that though he knew God, he intended to rebel against him. Nimrod's name is associated with the root מרד (*mrd*), "to rebel," and he is accused of instigating the building of the Tower of Babel (see BT *Pesaḥim* 94a–b, *Ḥullin* 89a). According to *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 10:9, he hunted humans. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 37:2; Rashi on Genesis 10:9.

Nimrod is connected with Esau through another legend, according to which Nimrod's success as a hunter derived from the fact that he wore the magic clothes fashioned by God for Adam and Eve. Seeing Nimrod in these clothes, Esau coveted them and killed him for them.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 24; *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:13; 65:16; *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 27:15; *Zohar* 1:73b, 139a, 142b; 2:39a–b; *ZḤ* 65a (*ShS*).

Here the word גבור (*gibbor*), *mighty*, alludes to *Gevurah*, on the left side, source of both Nimrod and Esau.

80. **the Academy of Eber** Eber was the great-grandson of Noah's son Shem (Genesis 10:21–24) and ancestor of Abraham. According to rabbinic tradition, both Shem and Eber headed an academy (or academies) of Torah.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:6 (the source of the teaching here); 63:10; 84:8; 85:12; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 6:2; BT *Makkot* 23b; *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), Genesis 24:62.

81. **'רעץ (*Retsots*), Crush, its head!'** See *Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ* 1: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai used to say, '... The best of the serpents—crush its head!'"

See JT *Qiddushin* 4:11, 66b; *Tanḥuma, Beshallaḥ* 8; *Zohar* 1:138a (*MhN*).

82. **This one, the side riding the serpent** Esau symbolizes the arch-demon, Samael, who rides the serpent. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13: "Samael... took his band and descended and saw all the creatures created by the blessed Holy One. He determined that the most cunningly evil was the serpent, as is said: *Now the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had made*. He [the serpent] looked like a camel, and he [Samael] mounted and rode him."

See *Zohar* 1:35b, 64a, 146a, 153a.

83. **that one, the side riding the sacred, perfect throne...** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who joins with *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the divine throne. The divine couple are also symbolized by the sun and the moon.

84. ***Now the serpent was sly...*** The verse reads: *Now the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had made*.

85. ***sly...* cunning** This interpretation derives from *Targum Onqelos*, which renders the word ערום (*arum*), *sly*, as חכים (*ḥakkim*), "wise, crafty, cunning."

86. **so that he would separate from him** So that Esau would separate from Jacob.

87. **‘If someone is coming to kill you, anticipate and kill him first’** See BT *Sanhedrin* 72a: “Torah teaches: If someone is coming to kill you, get up early and kill him.” See Rashi, ad loc.; Exodus 22:1.

88. **hurling him down to that heel** To the demonic, the lowest realm. See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31, where the heel symbolizes the Angel of Death.

89. ***his hand gripping Esau’s heel*** The verse reads: *Afterward his brother came out, his hand gripping Esau’s* עקב (*aqev*), *heel, so he called him* יעקב (*Ya’aqov*), *Jacob*. According to this folk etymology, Jacob’s name means “He grips the heel,” trying to prevent the prior birth of his twin.

90. **unable to escape him entirely** The holy cannot separate entirely from the demonic.

91. ***his hand gripping*—the moon whose light is concealed…** The *hand* symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who enacts the divine will. She remains vulnerable to the demonic and Her light is therefore concealed.

92. **to thrust him down to cling to his site** To thrust Esau down to the demonic realm, where he is meant to cling.

93. ***He called him Jacob*—the blessed Holy One called him Jacob…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:8; *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 4; *Leqaḥ Tov* and *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 25:26; Rashi on this verse; *Zohar* 1:60a, 186b.

94. ***Didn’t he rightly call him* יעקב (*ya’aqov*), *Jacob?*** The verse continues: ויעקבני (*Va-ya’qeveni*), *He’s deceived* [or: *usurped*] *me, these two times!*

95. **It is not written: *wasn’t he called*, but rather: *didn’t he call him*** Explicitly mentioning a subject, in this case a divine subject. See *Zohar* 1:145a.

96. ***he called*, anonymously, always implies the final rung…** The unnamed subject implies *Shekhinah*, last of

the ten *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 1:102b, 115a, 142b, 173b; 2:60b, 125b, 131a.

97. ***The God of Israel called him God…*** The full verse reads (and is usually translated): *There he* [Jacob] *set up an altar* ויקרא לו אל אלהי ישראל (*va-yiqra lo El Elohei Yisra'el*), *and called it God, God of Israel*. Rabbi Yitshak's radical interpretation here derives from BT *Megillah* 18a: "Rabbi Aḥa said in the name of Rabbi El'azar, 'How do we know that the blessed Holy One called Jacob "God"? Because it says: *The God of Israel called him God*. For if you imagine that Jacob called the altar "God," then the verse should read: *Jacob called it* [*God*]. Rather, *He called him*, namely Jacob, *God*. And who called him *God*? *The God of Israel*.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 79:8 and Theodor, ad loc.; Rashi, Naḥmanides, Baḥya ben Asher, and Recanati on Genesis 33:20; *Zohar* 1:150a; 3:86a.

98. ***God created the great sea serpents*—Jacob and Esau** See BT *Bava Batra* 74b: "*God created the great sea serpents*…. Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'This is Leviathan the elusive serpent and Leviathan the twisting serpent [see Isaiah 27:1].'" Here in the *Zohar*, Esau symbolizes the demonic primordial serpent, while Jacob symbolizes his holy, tortuous rival.

99. ***every living being that glides*—other rungs between them** Angelic beings who separate between the holy and demonic realms.

100. **every new moon, a single goat—luring him to his site…** According to Numbers 28:15, on each new moon a goat must be brought as a sin-offering. Here this goat is intended to preoccupy Satan and lure him to the demonic realm so that he does not threaten *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the moon.

The sixteenth-century kabbalists of Safed observed the day preceding the new moon as *Yom Kippur Qatan* ("Minor Day of Atonement").

See *Zohar* 1:65a, 122b; 2:33a, 145b, 185a, 238a, 269a. Cf. BT *Ḥullin* 60b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 6:3; *OY*, 4:51b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:890–95.

101. **Similarly on Yom Kippur, offering that goat cunningly…** On Yom Kippur a scapegoat bearing the sins of Israel is offered to the wilderness demon Azazel (Leviticus 16:10). Similarly, in the Babylonian Akitu ritual a goat, substituted for a human being, is offered to Ereshkigal, goddess of the Abyss. According to *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46, the goat is intended to preoccupy Satan: "They gave him [Satan] a bribe on Yom Kippur so that he would not nullify Israel's sacrifice."

See BT *Yoma* 20a: "On Yom Kippur, Satan has no permission to accuse. How do we know? Rami son of Ḥama said, 'השטן (*Hasatan*), Satan, equals 364 in numerical value—implying that on 364 days he has permission to accuse, while on Yom Kippur he does not.'"

See Naḥmanides on Leviticus 16:8; *Zohar* 1:11a, 64a, 65a, 113b-114b, 145b, 174b, 190a, 210b; 2:154b, 237b, 266b; 3:63a (*Piq*), 102a, 202b–203a, 258b; *ZḤ* 87b–c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 49; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:890–95.

102. **והשעיר (*Ve-ha-sa'ir*), *The goat*… Esau, who is שעיר (*sa'ir*), a hairy demon…** In Genesis 27:11, Esau is described as איש שעיר (*ish sa'ir*), *a hairy man*, but the word שעיר (*sa'ir*) also means "goat, demon, satyr." Further, Esau and his descendants inhabited שעיר (*se'ir*), *Seir* (see Genesis 32:4; 36:8–9).

See Genesis 25:25; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:15; *Zohar* 1:65a, 145b, 153a; 3:64a.

103. **All cunningly, deceptively… *With the crooked, deal tortuously*** See Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 46–48.

104. **to prevent that serpent from defiling the Sanctuary…** To prevent the demonic from defiling *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:114b; *ZḤ* 20c (*MhN*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 46.

105. **Jacob, master of the house** Jacob (symbolizing *Tif'eret*) is the husband of *Shekhinah*, known as "house." In the *Zohar* the phrase "master of the house" is applied to both Jacob and Moses (1:21b, 152b, 236b, 239a; 2:22b, 235b, 238b, 245a) as well as to the mystic who masters the secrets of Torah (2:99b). See Numbers 12:7: *Throughout My house he* [Moses] *is trusted*.

106. **Consequently, Holy Israel was selected…** Since Jacob outwitted Esau and received Isaac's blessing.

107. ***The boys grew up…*** The verse continues: *Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents*.

108. **Each one diverged on his path…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:9.

109. **So it had been in Rebekah's womb…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:6: "When she passed by idolatrous temples, Esau kicked convulsively to come out.… When she passed by synagogues or academies, Jacob kicked convulsively to come out."

110. **when they were created** When they were born.

111. ***a skilled hunter… a mighty hunter…*** See above, note 79.

112. **Robbing…and murdering…, pretending to be engaged in prayer** The word *field* suggests Esau's violence out in the wild, but it also alludes to prayer, based on the rabbinic interpretation of Genesis 24:63: *Isaac went out* לשוח (*la-suaḥ*), *to meditate* [or: *stroll*], *in the field as evening turned*. See BT *Berakhot* 26b: "Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Ḥanina said, 'The patriarchs instituted the prayers.'… Abraham instituted the morning prayer.… Isaac instituted the afternoon prayer, as is said: *Isaac went out to meditate in the field as evening turned*.… Jacob instituted the evening prayer." See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9.

113. **trapping him with his mouth** Based on a midrashic reading of Genesis 25:28: ציד בפיו (*tsayid be-fiv*), *he had a taste for hunted game*. See *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 8: "What does … *tsayid be-fiv* mean? *Tsayad*, He hunted [i.e., trapped], righteous Isaac *be-fiv*, with his mouth…. When Esau came in from the outdoors, he would say to his father, 'Father, should salt be tithed?' Isaac was amazed, and said, 'This son of mine is so punctilious with the *mitsvot*!' He asked him, 'My son, where have you been today?' He replied, 'In the house of study. Isn't this the law concerning such-and-such? Isn't this what has been forbidden? Isn't this what has been permitted?' By such words he trapped him with his mouth. Therefore he [Isaac] loved him."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:10; Rashi on Genesis 10:9; 25:28.

114. **his allotted share was… desolate places, wilderness, and fields** The domain of the demonic. See *Zohar* 1:169b, 178b, 184b, 228a; 2:157a, 237a.

115. **how could he have blessed Jacob when he later did?** When Jacob came to Isaac disguised as Esau. See Genesis 27.

116. **so that Jacob would be blessed without his intention…** Isaac conveys the quality of *Din* (severe "Judgment"), but because he imagined that he was blessing Esau, Jacob was not affected by the power of *Din*. Instead, Jacob was blessed with the intention of *Tif'eret*, also known as *Raḥamim* ("Compassion").

117. **When Jacob entered… *Shekhinah* entered with him** According to Genesis 27:27, when Jacob approached Isaac, disguised in Esau's hunting clothes, Isaac exclaimed: *See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH*. In BT *Ta'anit* 29b, this field is identified (in the name of Rav) with an apple orchard, which in Kabbalah symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35–37; *Zohar* 1:36a, 85a–b, 122a, 128b, 142b, 143b, 224b, 249b; 2:60b,

61b; 3:74a, 84a, 133b (*IR*), 135b (*IR*), 286b–287a, 288a (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365.

Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; and *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 11: "When Jacob entered, he was accompanied by the fragrance of the Garden of Eden." In Kabbalah the Garden of Eden also symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

118. **this was for mourning over Abraham** See BT *Bava Batra* 16b: "That day Abraham our father died, and Jacob our father prepared a dish of lentils to comfort his father Isaac."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:11; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 3.

119. **the verse should read: *Isaac was boiling a stew*** Because he was mourning his father Abraham.

120. **knowing his root on the side to which he clung** Knowing the root of Esau.

121. **dish that breaks the power of red blood** See BT *Berakhot* 40a: "One who eats lentils once a month keeps diphtheria away from his house."

122. **to break his power** Esau derives from the left side, symbolized by red. See Genesis 25:25 (cited above, page 268): *The first one came out ruddy*. See Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen, *Ma'amar al ha-Atsilut ha-Semalit*, ed. Scholem, *Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* 2 (1927): 253; Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 46.

123. **he sold himself as a slave** On Esau's subjugation to Jacob, see Genesis 25:23; 27:29, 40.

124. **to his rung** To Esau's rung, the demonic.

125. **he would turn into a servant to his descendants...** Satan would be powerless against them. See above, note 101.

126. **so that his house would not be defiled, defended by him** So *Shekhinah*, Jacob's house, would not be defiled by the demonic intruder, but rather defended by Jacob himself, "master of the house," husband of *Shekhinah*. See above, page 272.

127. **With Laban too this was fitting** It was fitting for Jacob to act cunningly. See Genesis 30:31–43.

128. **he was a sorcerer…** On Laban's powers of witchcraft, see *Targum Yerushalmi*, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and *Sekhel Tov* on Genesis 30:27; *Zohar* 1:133b, 166b–167b.

129. **'a consummate man'** See above, note 52.

130. **dealing appropriately…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 70:13; BT *Megillah* 13b.

131. **For he comprised two components** Jacob inherited the quality of *Ḥesed* ("Love") from Abraham and the quality of *Din* (severe "Judgment") from Isaac. See *Zohar* 1:146a; 3:292b–193a (*IZ*).

132. ***There was a famine in the land…*** The verse continues: *besides the earlier famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham, and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar*.

133. ***The Rock, His work is perfect…*** The verse continues: *for all His ways are justice. A faithful God, without corruption, just and upright is He*.

134. **until He had commanded him for his own good** Not to eat from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

135. **He did not punish him as he deserved** According to the divine threat: *On the day you eat from it, you will surely die* (Genesis 2:17).

136. **a day—which is a thousand years** See Psalms 90:4: *For a thousand years in Your eyes are like a day that has just gone by*.

137. **except for those seventy he gave to King David…** According to a midrashic tradition, King David was destined to die at childbirth, but Adam offered him 70 of his own 1000 allotted years, so David lived for 70 years and Adam for 930. David symbolizes *Shekhinah*, also known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"), who possesses nothing of Her own, only what She receives from the *sefirot* above Her.

See Genesis 5:5; Jubilees 4:30; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 19, and David Luria, ad loc., n. 31; *Midrash Tehillim* 92:10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:12; *Bereshit Rabbati* 5:5; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Genesis, 41; *Zohar* 1:55a–b, 91b, 168a, 233b, 248b; 2:103b, 235a; *ZḤ* 67d (*ShS*), 81a (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 68 (85); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 383.

138. **וחיה (*ve-ḥayah*), *and live*...in this world... in the world that is coming** The final two letters of the word וחיה (*ve-ḥayah*), *and live*, allude to the two worlds since, according to rabbinic tradition, this world was created by the letter ה (*he*) and the world that is coming by the letter י (*yod*).

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:10; JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77c; BT *Menaḥot* 29b; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva*, Version 1 (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:363); *Zohar* 1:141b; 2:22b; *ZḤ* 22b (*MhN*).

139. **so that a fine shoot will issue from them into the world** To enable them to engender worthy children. See BT *Bava Qamma* 38b; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 32:4; *Zohar* 1:56b, 118a (*MhN*), 227a.

The word גזעא (*giz'a*) means "stock, trunk, stem, shoot." See M *Bava Batra* 5:4; BT *Bava Batra* 82a.

140. **the blessed Holy One always deals strictly with the righteous...** See BT *Yevamot* 121b: "Rabbi Abba said, '... The blessed Holy One deals strictly with those around Him even to a hairbreadth.'" See *Zohar* 1:185b; 2:247b.

141. ***God* נסה (*nissah*), *tested, Abraham*... נס (*nes*), *a banner*...** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:1: "*It came to pass after these things that God* נסה (*nissah*), *tested, Abraham* [by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac]. It is written: *You have given* נס (*nes*), *a banner, to those in awe of You*, להתנוסס (*le-hitnoses*), *to be unfurled*.... (Psalms 60:6)—trial upon trial, elevation above elevation, to test them in the world, to elevate them in the world like a ship's banner."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:6; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 43; *Mekhilta, Baḥodesh* 9; *Zohar* 1:119b; 3:18a.

142. **although this has already been explained** Differently. See *Zohar* 1:119b, where Abraham's test is interpreted as a challenge to balance *Ḥesed* with *Gevurah*.

143. **when the blessed Holy One delights in the righteous…** See BT *Berakhot* 5a, in the name of Rav Huna: "Whomever the blessed Holy One delights in, He crushes with suffering, as is said: *YHVH delights in crushing him by disease*."

144. **soul resembles soul** The human soul resembles its divine source (*Binah* or *Shekhinah*). Elsewhere, God is called "soul of soul." See Solomon ibn Gabirol, *Keter Malkhut* 4:47: "You are soul of soul." Cf. *Zohar* 1:103b, 245a; 3:109b (*RM*), 152a; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 110, 375, n. 97. On the parallel between the soul and God, see BT *Berakhot* 10a; *Midrash Tehillim* 103:5.

145. **the body's image abides in supernal mystery** The human body is modeled on *Adam Qadmon* ("Primordial Adam"), the divine body comprising the ten *sefirot*.

146. **as long as soul corresponds with body** As long as both are equally vibrant.

147. **once the body is broken, soul becomes dominant** See *Zohar* 1:180b; 3:168a.

148. ***a tested stone*** The verse reads: *See, I lay in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation*. Elsewhere this *tested stone* (or *stone of testing*) symbolizes *Shekhinah*, by whom the righteous are tested. See *Zohar* 1:231a–b; 2:230a, 249b (*Heikh*); 3:168a; *ZḤ* 100c–d (*TZ*).

149. **Would you ever imagine that the soul of the blessed Holy One hates…?** The blessed Holy One, *Tif'eret*, is also known as *Raḥamim* ("Compassion").

150. **that rung upon which all souls depend hates the soul…** All souls derive from *Shekhinah*. Characterized by *Din* ("Judgment"), She hates the soul of the wicked.

151. **Alternatively… as is said: *YHVH Elohim has sworn by His soul*** Alternatively, *Shekhinah*, soul of the

blessed Holy One, hates the wicked.

152. **So, *He tests the righteous*** This divine testing is a sign of love.

153. **Descending below, he discovered the craving of the evil impulse…** Adam was seduced by demonic powers. See *Zohar* 1:52a–b, 245a (*Heikh*).

154. **strong wine, unclarified, one day old** New, murky wine whose lees had not yet settled. These dregs symbolize the demonic.

The phrase חמרא תקיף (*ḥamra taqqif*), "strong wine," can also mean "fermented, vinegary wine" (see BT *Berakhot* 5b; *Bava Metsi'a* 64a, 83a), but the rendering here seems preferable since fermented wine is old.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 23: "Noah found a vine that had been banished from the Garden of Eden along with its clusters. He took of its fruit and ate and desired them in his heart. He planted a vineyard with it. That same day its fruit flourished…. He drank of its wine and was exposed in the tent."

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 9:20; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Noah* 20; *Zohar* 1:73a–b; 2:245a (*Heikh*), 267b (*Heikh*); *ZḤ* 22c (*MhN*).

155. **He drank some of it, became drunk, and exposed himself** A paraphrase of Genesis 9:21: *He drank of the wine and became drunk, and exposed himself inside his tent*. See the *Zohar* passages cited in the preceding note.

156. ***Abram went down to Egypt…*** Descending to the demonic realm.

157. ***Abram went up from Egypt…*** The verse continues: *to the Negev*. The Negev is the southern region of Canaan and, by extension, *negev* also means "south" in biblical Hebrew. Here it is identified with the warmth of *Ḥesed* ("Love"). Through discovering God and expressing love, Abraham had previously attained this rung. Now,

having explored and endured the demonic regions, he returned to *Ḥesed*.

See Micah 7:20; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Bahir* 92 (135), 131–32 (190–91); *Zohar* 1:77b, 80a, 83a–84a, 96a, 97b (*ST*), 98a; 2:36a; 3:14a.

158. **He entered in peace and emerged in peace** The expression derives from the famous account of the four rabbis who engaged in mystical search. See IT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77c: "Four entered פרדס (*pardes*), an orchard [whence, "paradise"].... Ben Azzai glimpsed and went mad.... Ben Zoma glimpsed and died.... Aḥer [Elisha son of Avuyah] glimpsed and severed the saplings.... Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and emerged in peace."

See *Tosefta, Ḥagigah* 2:2; BT *Ḥagigah* 14b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4; *Devarim Rabbah* 7:4. The expression is applied to Abraham in *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:3.

159. ***There was a famine in the land...*** The verse continues: *besides the earlier famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham, and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar*. Isaac's journey to the land of the Philistines also symbolizes a descent to the demonic realm.

160. **Every single one of the righteous is tested by the blessed Holy One...** Descending to the demonic realm, exploring it, and emerging unscathed constitute an essential spiritual challenge.

161. ***When the men of the place asked..., he said, "She is my sister"*** The verse continues: *for he was afraid to say, "my wife," thinking, "Lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful."*

162. **Just as Abraham had said** See Genesis 12:13,19; 20:2.

163. **because *Shekhinah* accompanied him with his wife** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 60:16; *Zohar* 1:50a, 82a, 111b, 133a; 3:52a.

164. ***Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister'*** *Shekhinah* is known as Lower Wisdom, deriving from the *sefirah* of *Ḥokhmah*

("Wisdom"). The verse in Proverbs is applied to Her, and similarly both Abraham and Isaac called Her *sister*.

See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 20; above, pages 21, 162.

165. **Abraham and Isaac were entitled to this…** They symbolize *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, the divine right and left arms, which embrace *Shekhinah*, depicted as the beloved female in Song of Songs. See *Zohar* 1:112a.

166. ***et Rivqah ishto*, precisely! This is *Shekhinah*** Grammatically, the accusative particle את (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when et appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:90a, 135b.

In the *Zohar* the word את (*et*) symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who comprises the entire alphabet of divine speech, from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*). See the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: "I am *alpha* and *omega*."

167. **Just as concerning idolatry… *le-tsaḥeq* … so too: *metsaḥeq*…** This conjugation of the root צחק (*tsḥq*) means "to play, jest, sport, toy with, caress, fondle." In the idolatrous incident of the Golden Calf, the verb may have sexual connotations; here Rabbi Shim'on suggests that although Isaac was surrounded by idolatrous Philistines, through arousing his wife he aroused her divine counterpart, *Shekhinah*, symbolized by את (*et*).

See Genesis 39:14; *Tosefta, Sotah* 6:6; *Bereshit Rabbah* 53:11; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:1; *ZḤ* 20a (*MhN*).

168. **'Israelites are holy and do not copulate by day'** See BT *Shabbat* 86a: "Rav Huna said, 'Israelites are holy and do not copulate by day.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 64:5; *Zohar* 1:148b.

169. **Abimelech…gazed through astrology…*the mother of Sisera*…** According to Rabbi Shim'on, the verse in Judges implies that Sisera's mother discovered through astrology that her son had been murdered by Jael.

See Judges 4:17–21; *Zohar* 2:172a–b; 3:113a, 184b; *Yeraḥme'el* 6:3; Joseph Albo, *Iqqarim* 4:43; Malbim on Judges 5:28.

170. **Abimelech would have been justified…** Since Isaac had not informed Abimelech that Rebekah was his wife, Abimelech would have been justified in taking her for himself, were it not that God had already reprimanded him in the case of Abraham. See Genesis 20:3–7.

171. ***Because I said to myself, 'There is just no fear of God in this place*** The verse continues: *and they will kill me because of my wife*.' This was Abraham's justification to Abimelech.

172. **Why?** Why did he claim that she was his sister?

173. ***fear of God* is faith** *Shekhinah* is characterized by awe (or fear) and known as מהימנותא (*meheimanuta*), "Faith."

174. ***Shekhinah* does not dwell outside the land of Israel** See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1: "Rabbi El'azar son of Tsadok said, '…*Shekhinah* is not revealed outside the land [of Israel].'" Cf. BT *Ketubbot* 110b: "Whoever lives in the land of Israel is like one who has a God; whoever lives outside the land is like one who has no God."

See *Zohar* 1:85a, 121a; 2:5a (*MhN*), 170b.

175. **this is not its site; it does not dwell here** Technically, the land of the Philistines is included in the borders of Israel (see Genesis 15:18), but since it was not conclusively conquered until the reign of King David, its status is somewhat lower. See Rashi on Genesis 26:12; *OY, MM, NO, Nefesh David*, and *NZ* here.

176. **until many generations later** Until the reign of King David. See 2 Samuel 8:1; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 36, and David Luria, ad loc., nn. 106,108; *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 26:31; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 26:28; *ZḤ* 27a.

177. **by showing kindness to Isaac, by saying… *Here, my land is before you…*** This verse was actually spoken to Abraham, not Isaac. Abimelech's kindness to Isaac appears in Genesis 26:11.

178. **Woe to the wicked, whose kindness is imperfect!** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 89:7: “Rabbi Shemu’el son of Naḥman said, ‘Cursed are the wicked, for they do not perform kindness completely!’”

179. **At first Ephron said… But later he said…** At first Ephron offered the field and cave to Abraham as a gift, but later he sought payment.

See BT *Bava Metsi’a* 87a; *Sekhel Tov*, Genesis 23:15; Rashi and *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 23:11.

180. ***Here, my land is before you*** As indicated above, note 177, this verse was actually spoken to Abraham, not Isaac.

181. ***Go away from us…*** The verse continues: *for you have become much mightier than we are*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 64:9.

182. **since he knew mysteries of wisdom, he… dug a well of water…** See Genesis 26:18. The well symbolizes the realm of faith, *Shekhinah*, who is filled with the flow of emanation, which She conveys to the world. By digging the well here below, Isaac stimulated the flow above.

183. **Abraham endeavored and dug a well of water** See Genesis 21:30.

184. **Jacob found it prepared and sat down by it** On Jacob and the well, see Genesis 29:2–10. Abraham and Isaac, symbolizing *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah* (the right and left divine arms) embrace *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the well. Jacob, symbolizing *Tif’eret*, consummates the union with Her. See *Zohar* 1:133a, 140b.

185. **tassels (which is a commandment), enveloping himself in them** According to Numbers 15:38–40, Israel is commanded to wear a blue-violet thread in the corner tassel of their garments.

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 115: “Rabbi Me’ir says, ‘… Whoever fulfills the commandment of the tassel is as though he greeted the face of *Shekhinah*, for the blue-violet resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the sky, and the

sky resembles the Throne of Glory.'" In the *Zohar* the tassel symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

186. ***tefillin*, placing them on his head and arm, a fitting supernal mystery** The *tefillin* ("phylacteries") consist of two black leather boxes containing passages from the Torah (Exodus 13:1–10, 11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21) written on parchment. They are bound by black leather straps on the left arm and on the head, and are worn during weekday morning services. Each of the biblical passages indicates that the Israelites should place a sign upon their hand and a frontlet (or reminder) between their eyes.

By wearing *tefillin* one imitates God, who Himself wears *tefillin*, according to Rabbi Avin in BT *Berakhot* 6a. According to Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Avin, the verse inscribed in God's *tefillin* is 1 Chronicles 17:21: *Who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth?*

The commandment of *tefillin* was widely disregarded in France and Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The *Zohar*, seeking to reinforce the commitment to this *mitsvah*, emphasizes its mystical significance. The two *tefillin* (on the head and the arm) symbolize *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, and by wearing them faithfully one unites the divine couple.

See *Tosafot, Shabbat*, 49a, s.v. *ke-elisha ba'al kenafayim;* Isaac the Blind, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 4; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 525; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 4; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Berakhot* 6a; *Zohar* 1:13b–14a, 147a; 3:81a, 140a (*IR*), 262a–263a, 264a, 269a–b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 235–39; Baer, *History*, 1:250; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1161–65.

187. **appears** אשתכח (*Ishtekhaḥ*). Several MSS read (or appear to read): אשתבח (*ishtabbaḥ*), "prides Himself."

188. ***He moved on…another well, and they did not quarrel over it…*** The verse continues: *so he named it* רחבות (*Reḥovot*), *Expanses, saying, "Because now YHVH* הרחיב (*hirḥiv*),

has provided room, for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.”

189. ***YHVH will guide you… satisfy your soul… in scorched regions…*** The verse continues: *and invigorate your bones. You will be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not fail*.

190. **This verse has been established and discussed** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 34:15.

191. ***tamid*—the ‘continual’ twilight offering** According to Exodus 29:38–42, a lamb is to be offered on the altar every morning and evening. The evening offering symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

192. **embraced by the arm of Isaac** *Shekhinah* is embraced by *Gevurah*, the left arm of the sefirotic body, symbolized by Isaac.

193. **share in the world that is coming** In the world that is coming, worthy souls ascend to *Shekhinah*.

194. ***He guides me in paths of righteousness*** *Shekhinah* is known as *Righteousness*. Just as She figures in this verse (*He guides me in paths of righteousness*), so She is implied in the verse from Isaiah (*YHVH will guide you*…).

195. ***be-tsaḥtsaḥot, with dazzles*** Rabbi Ḥiyya understands the rare word בצחצחות (*be-tsaḥtsaḥot*), “in scorched regions,” to mean “with dazzles,” based on the root צחח (*tsḥḥ*), “to be dazzling.”

196. **resplendent speculum…** אספקלריא דנהרא (*Ispaqlarya de-nahara*), “A speculum [or: glass, mirror, lens] that shines.” See BT *Yevamot* 49b: “All the prophets gazed through a dim glass [literally: an *ispaqlarya* that does not shine], while Moses our teacher gazed through a clear glass [literally: an *ispaqlarya* that shines].” Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face-to-face.”

In the *Zohar*, *Shekhinah* is the *ispaqlarya* that does not shine on its own but rather reflects the other *sefirot*, while *Tif’eret* is

the *ispaqlarya* that shines. Souls abiding in *Shekhinah* delight to gaze into the higher speculum.

197. **If the soul…is basking in supernal bliss, why *invigorate your bones*?** If the verse deals with spiritual bliss, why does it continue with a reference to the body?

198. **Its supernal waters never cease for all eternity…** *Shekhinah*, the garden, is watered constantly by the flow of emanation from above. Similarly, the soul and the revived body are nourished.

199. ***Like a spring*** The verse continues: *whose waters do not fail*.

200. **that flowing, gushing river whose waters never cease** *Yesod*, who conveys the flow of emanation.

201. **well containing *a spring*, filled by that *spring*…** The well and *spring* symbolize the divine couple, *Shekhinah* and *Yesod*, who unite as one.

202. **Whoever gazes at this well will gaze at the mystery of supernal faith** Through the lens of *Shekhinah*, one views the entire sefirotic realm. See *Zohar* 1:7b; Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 4b.

203. **This is the symbol of the patriarchs striving to dig a well…** See Genesis 21:30; 26:18. Digging the well and uncovering the spring symbolizes and stimulates the union of *Shekhinah* and *Yesod*.

204. **to enhance this well fittingly through the mystery of sacrifices…** According to Kabbalah, sacrifical offerings promote the union of *Shekhinah* and Her partner.

205. ***to work it and tend it*—through sacrifices and offerings** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:5: "[*YHVH Elohim took the human and placed him in the Garden of Eden*] *to work it and tend it*—these are the offerings." The *Garden* symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:57b, 199b; 2:165b; 3:263a.

206. **What is *Ḥokhmot, Wisdoms?*** Why the plural? See *Zohar* 3:131b (*IZ*).

207. **Supernal Wisdom and lesser Wisdom…** *Ḥokhmah* (“Wisdom”) and Shekhinah, known as “Lower Wisdom,” deriving from *Ḥokhmah* and rooted within.

See *Zohar* 2:235b; 3:290a (*IZ*), 296a (*IZ*).

208. **Expanding to radiate… the world that is coming…** The primordial point of *Ḥokhmah* expands into the circle of *Binah*, known as “the world that is coming.” See *Zohar* 1:15a.

עלמא דאתי (*Alma de-atei*), the Aramaic equivalent of the rabbinic Hebrew העולם הבא (*ha-olam ha-ba*), “the world that is coming,” is often understood as referring to the hereafter and is usually translated as “the world to come.” From another point of view, however, “the world that is coming” already exists, occupying another dimension. See *Tanḥuma, Vayiqra* 8: “The wise call it *ha-olam ha-ba* not because it does not exist now, but for us today in this world it is still to come.” Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:8; and Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, 37: “‘The world to come’ does not succeed ‘this world’ in time, but exists from eternity as a reality outside and above time, to which the soul ascends.”

In Kabbalah “the world that is coming” often refers to *Binah*, the continuous source of emanation. See *Zohar* 3:290b (*IZ*): “the world that is coming, constantly coming, never ceasing.”

Cf. *Bahir* 106 (160); Asher ben David, *Peirush Shelosh Esreh Middot*, in *Kabbalah* 2 (1997): 293; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 26 (30); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 375; *Zohar* 1:83a, 92a.

209. **The world that is coming was created with י (*yod*)** With the first letter of the divine name יה (*Yah*). See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:10; JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77c; BT *Menaḥot* 29b; *Zohar* 1:140a; 2:22b.

Here the letter י (*yod*) symbolizes the primordial point of *Ḥokhmah*, which expands into *Binah*, “the world that is coming.”

210. **When all is prepared…joy radiates—all in silence…** The union of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah* is consummated in silence.

211. **there issued from this site fire, water, and air… a single voice…** From *Binah*, the Divine Mother, issue *Gevurah, Ḥesed*, and *Tif'eret*, symbolized respectively by fire, water, and air. *Tif'eret* combines the qualities of *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, and His air emerges audibly as a voice.

See *Zohar* 1:16b, 50b, 74a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 89 (113). Cf. BT *Berakhot* 15b: "The womb, which takes in silently, gives forth loudly."

212. **From here one must prepare himself through action—and inquire** Human righteous action stimulates and unifies the *sefirot* below *Binah*. Here spiritual quest is appropriate and fruitful, whereas *Binah* Herself is a concealed realm where questions remain unanswered. She is known as "Who." See *Zohar* 1:1b, 29b–30a, 45b, 85b–86a, 237b; 2:127a, 138a, 139b, 226a, 231b.

213. **That expanse encompassing all sparkling stars** *Yesod*, who includes all the higher *sefirot*.

214. **There *she raises her voice*, upper and lower** Upper wisdom (*Ḥokhmah*) pours into *Yesod*, while lower Wisdom (*Shekhinah*) imbibes from there.

215. ***Prepare your work outside, make it ready… in the field…*** The verse concludes: *afterward build your house*.

216. ***primal days…from one end of heaven to the other*** The cosmic days of Creation, from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, above and below *Tif'eret*, known as *heaven*. See BT *Ḥagigah* 11b; *Zohar* 1:158a.

In this realm below *Binah*, human works have an effect and the divine word can be probed. See above, note 212.

217. ***a field blessed by YHVH*** The field of *Shekhinah*, also known as the Holy Apple Orchard.

See BT *Ta'anit* 29b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 11; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35–37;

Zohar 1:36a, 85a–b, 122a, 128b, 142b, 143b, 224b, 249b; 2:60b, 61b; 3:74a, 84a, 133b (*IR*), 135b (*IR*), 286b–287a, 288a (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365.

218. ***Afterward build your house*—the soul within one's body** The soul housed in the body.

219. **consummate** גבר שלים (*Gevar shelim*), "A consummate man," borrowed from *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 25:27, where Jacob—in contrast to Esau the hunter—is described as איש תם (*ish tam*), "a simple [or: innocent, plain, mild, quiet, sound, wholesome] man."

220. **in peace** בשלם (*Bishlam*). See Genesis 26:22: *He moved on from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it*.

221. **he called that peace *Reḥovot*, *Expanses*** Whereas according to Rabbi Ḥiyya, Isaac gave the name *Reḥovot* to the well (*Shekhinah*), Rabbi Shim'on teaches that this name was given to "peace," symbolizing *Yesod*, the spring, ever-flowing and expanding. *Yesod*, the divine phallus, brings peace by uniting *Tif'eret* with *Shekhinah*. See BT *Shabbat* 152a, where Rabbi Shim'on son of Ḥalafta refers to the phallus as "peacemaker of the home."

222. ***will abide on earth*... will cause earth to abide...** See *Pesiqta Rabbati* 5: "Happy are the righteous, for they cause *Shekhinah* to abide on earth, as is written: *For the upright* ישכנו ארץ (*yishkenu arets*), *will abide on earth* [understood to mean: ישבינו ארץ (*yashkinu arets*), *will cause Shekhinah to abide on earth*]."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:7; 64:3; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:1; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 5:1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), Naso 24 (in the name of Rabbi Shim'on); *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 6.

Here Rabbi Shim'on apparently implies several nuances: the righteous sustain the world, causing earth to abide; they cause *Shekhinah* to abide *on earth;* they cause *Shekhinah* (symbolized by *earth*) to dwell with *Yesod* (or, they

cause *Yesod* to dwell *on earth*, i.e., with *Shekhinah*), thereby ensuring sustenance for the world.

223. ***When Isaac was old*** The verse continues: *and his eyes were too dim to see, he called Esau, his elder son, and said to him, 'My son!' He answered, 'Here I am.'*

224. **This verse has been established and explained** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:6.

225. ***God called the light Day*—Abraham, light of day…** Abraham symbolizes the flowing light of *Ḥesed*, first of the seven lower *sefirot*, the primal days of Creation. Gradually this light intensifies, radiating throughout the entire sefirotic week. See *Zohar* 1:46a.

226. ***Abraham was old*, בא בימים (*ba ba-yamim*), *coming into days…*** The idiom בא בימים (*ba ba-yamim*), normally understood as "advanced in days, advanced in years," is here interpreted hyperliterally. As Abraham aged, he progressed through the cosmic days, beginning with *Shekhinah* and culminating with *Ḥesed*.

See *Zohar* 1:103a, 126a (*MhN*), 129a, 224a; 3:170b.

227. ***shining ever brighter until full day*** The full verse reads: *The path of the righteous is like gleaming light, shining ever brighter until full day.*

228. **Isaac, who is *darkness*, proceeding to absorb *Night*** Isaac symbolizes *Gevurah*, known as *darkness*, who is linked with *Shekhinah*, symbolized by *Night*. See *Zohar* 1:16b, 112b, 133a, 136a, 168b.

229. **kissed his hands** A frequent sign of veneration and thanks among the Companions of the *Zohar*.

See 1:83b, 133a, 250b; 2:21b, 23b, 62a, 68a, 87a, 121b, 193b; 3:31a, 57b, 65b, 73b, 119b, 121a, 221b, 296b (*IZ*); *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:2; BT *Berakhot* 8b; Bacher, "Le baisement des mains dans le Zohar."

230. **But why of Jacob… *Israel's eyes were heavy from old age?*** The verse continues: *—he could not see*. Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, balancing the light of *Ḥesed* and the

darkness of *Gevurah*. Why should he suffer from lack of vision?

231. **from that side they *were heavy*** His weak vision derived from the darkness of *Gevurah*, his father's *sefirah*.

232. ***He could not see*—see properly, but they were not dim** His eyes were not dim. See Genesis 48:8: *Israel saw the sons of Joseph;* and Ibn Ezra, ad loc.

233. ***He called Esau, his elder son*** The full verse reads: *When Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, he called Esau, his elder son, and said to him, "My son!" He answered, "Here I am."*

234. **encompassed by the aspect of severe Judgment** Esau inherited the quality of his father's *sefirah: Gevurah*, or *Din* ("Judgment"). See *Zohar* 1:137b, 145a.

235. **Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah** The three companions of Daniel at Nebuchadnezzar's court who were thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to worship the king's image.

236. **whether He saves us or not…** By their unconditional devotion, they guaranteed that God's name would be sanctified.

237. **a word was revealed to Ezekiel…** See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 7:8: "Nebuchadnezzar set up an image and selected three from every nation and three from among all of Israel [to bow down to it]. The three from Israel, who were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, made up their minds not to worship idolatry. They went to Daniel and said to him: 'Our master Daniel!… Should we bow down to it or not?' He replied, 'Here is the prophet before you; go to him.' They immediately went to Ezekiel, and asked him the same question they had asked Daniel: 'Should we bow down to it or not?' He replied, 'I have already received a tradition from my teacher Isaiah: *Hide yourself for a little moment, until wrath has passed* (Isaiah 26:20).' They said to him, 'Do you really want people to say that all nations bow down to this image?' He said to them, 'What then do you say?' They

replied, ‘We want to impair it by being there and not bowing down, so that people will say, “All nations bow down to this image except Israel.”’ He said to them, ‘If that is your idea, wait till I consult the Almighty.’… He said before the blessed Holy One, ‘Master of the Universe! Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah want to sacrifice their lives for the sanctification of Your name. Will You stand by them or not?’ He replied, ‘I will not stand by them…. Since you have caused Me to destroy My house, to burn My Temple, and to exile My children among the nations, and after that you come to seek Me, *As I live, I will not respond to your inquiry* (Ezekiel 20:3).’ At that moment Ezekiel wept, lamented, and wailed…. He returned to them, weeping. When he reached them, they asked him, ‘What did the blessed Holy One say to you?’ He replied, ‘He will not stand by you.’ They said to him, ‘Whether He stands by us or not, we will offer our lives for the sanctification of His name.’

“Know that this is so, because before they approached Ezekiel, what did they say to Nebuchadnezzar? *We have no need to answer you in this matter. If it is so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us* (Daniel 3:16–17). After they came to Ezekiel and heard the answer, they said to Nebuchadnezzar, *But if not, let it be known to you, O king*—whether He saves us or not, *let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your god…!*

“When they left Ezekiel, the blessed Holy One appeared and said, ‘Ezekiel, do you think that I will not stand by them? I certainly will…, but let them go and tell them nothing. I will let them go on unsuspecting.’ What did they do? They went and mixed among the crowds and said, ‘If He does not save us, let it be known to you.’ This is the source of the popular oath: ‘By Him who established the world on three pillars.’ Some say these are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; some say these are Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.”

238. **as soon as one comes to purify himself, he is certainly assisted** See BT *Shabbat* 104a: “Resh Lakish

said, '... If one comes to defile himself, he is provided an opening; if one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.'"

See BT *Yoma* 39a; *Makkot* 10b; *Zohar* 1:54a, 56b, 62a, 125b, 169b, 198b; 2:50a; 3:47a.

239. ***Strength*, as is said: *YHVH gives strength to His people*** According to the rabbinic interpretation of this verse, *strength* refers to Torah, given by God *to His people* at Sinai. See *Mekhilta, Shirta* 3; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 343.

240. **better for him if he had never been created!** See BT *Berakhot* 17a, in the name of Rava: "Whoever acts for ulterior motives—better for him if he had never been created!" This saying is cited differently by *Tosafot* (*Pesaḥim* 50b, s.v. *ve-khan be-osim*) and Asher ben Yeḥiel (*Pesaḥim* 4:2), matching the wording here: "Whoever engages in Torah for ulterior motives—better for him if he had never been created!"

See *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 1:5, 110c: "One who learns without intending to act—better for him if he had never been created!"

Cf. *Vayiqra Rabbah* 35:7; JT *Berakhot* 1:2,3b; BT *Ta'anit* 7a; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Psalms, 870.

241. **unique in all the world** חטיבא בעלמא (*Ḥativa be-alma*). See BT *Berakhot* 6a: "The blessed Holy One said to Israel: You have made me חטיבה אחת (*ḥativah aḥat*), unique, in all the world, and I will make you unique in all the world."

See *Tosefta, Sotah* 7:10; *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 26:17; *Targum Onqelos*, ibid., 17–18; *Targum Yerushalmi*, ibid., 18; BT *Ḥagigah* 3a–b; *Tanḥuma, Ki Tavo* 2. On the word חטיבה (*ḥativah*), see Samuel Krauss, in *MGWJ* 54 (1910): 44–54; Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-Fshutah*, 8:680.

242. ***Shekhinah* revealed it to Rebekah, and Rebekah to Jacob** See *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 10: "When Isaac sent Esau to hunt game so that he would feed him, it was conveyed to Rebekah by the Holy Spirit." See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 27:5.

243. ***Rebekah loved Jacob*, which has already been discussed** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:10; *Midrash Tehillim* 9:7.

244. **It was then the eve of Passover** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 32; *Shemot Rabbah* 15:11.

245. **when the evil impulse must be exterminated and the moon prevail…** On the eve of Passover, the last remnants of leaven are burned, symbolizing the extermination of the evil impulse. In its place, Shekhinah prevails, symbolized by the moon.

See the prayer attributed to Rabbi Tanḥum in JT *Berakhot* 4:2, 7d: "May it be Your will, *YHVH* my God and God of my fathers, that you break and destroy the yoke of the evil impulse from our heart. For You created us to do Your will, and we must do Your will; You desire it and we desire it. So who prevents it? The leaven in the dough."

See BT *Berakhot* 17a and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *se'or she-ba-issah; Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ* 2; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Noaḥ* 4; *Zohar* 1:226b; 2:40a–b, 182a.

246. **so she prepared two dishes** See Genesis 27:9: *Go now to the flock and fetch me from there two fine goat kids, and I will make them into delicacies for your father, just the way he likes*. On the two offerings prescribed for the eve of Passover, see M *Pesaḥim* 6:3.

247. **two goats on Yom Kippur, one for *YHVH* and one for** Azazel On Yom Kippur one goat is offered to *YHVH* and a scapegoat bearing the sins of Israel is offered to the wilderness demon Azazel (Leviticus 16:5–10).

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:14: "*Fetch me from there two fine goat kids*…. Rabbi Berekhiah said in the name of Rabbi Ḥelbo, '*Fine* for you and *fine* for your descendants. *Fine* for you, since through them you will receive the blessings; *fine* for your descendants, since through them they will be atoned on Yom Kippur.'"

248. **one for a supernal rung and one to subdue the rung of Esau…** One corresponding to the holy rung of

Isaac, *Gevurah*, and the other to subdue the demonic rung of Esau, Samael. See *Zohar* 1:145b.

According to *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46, the scapegoat is intended to preoccupy Satan: "They gave him [Satan] a bribe on Yom Kippur so that he would not nullify Israel's sacrifice."

See BT *Yoma* 20a: "On Yom Kippur, Satan has no permission to accuse. How do we know? Rami son of Ḥama said, 'השטן (*Hasatan*), Satan, equals 364 in numerical value—implying that on 364 days he has permission to accuse, while on Yom Kippur he does not.'"

See Naḥmanides on Leviticus 16:8; *Zohar* 1:11a, 64a, 65a, 113b–114b, 138b, 145b, 174b, 190a, 210b; 2:154b, 237b, 266b; 3:63a (*Piq*), 102a, 202b–203a, 258b; *ZḤ* 87b–c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 49; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:890–95.

249. ***He brought him wine…*** **from a distant realm he brought it near…** Why does the verse employ the verb *brought* rather than *gave*? Because Jacob brought Isaac intoxicating wine from far away, from the alien realm of Esau. See above, page 278.

Some commentators interpret differently: "from a distant realm he brought him near, from the realm of Esau," i.e., Jacob brought Isaac from the demonic realm of Esau to holiness. See *OY*, Vital, *MmD*.

250. **from that wine in which all delight is found, to delight Isaac…** The delicious flow from *Binah*, to sweeten the harshness of Isaac's *sefirah, Din* ("Judgment").

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 27:25; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 16; *Zohar* 3:100a (RM), 189a, 258b.

251. **as delight is needed on the side of the Levites** The Levites also symbolize *Din;* their side is sweetened by their own song and music. See *Zohar* 1:103b, 148b; 3:48b, 121b (*RM*).

252. ***Rebekah took…*** The full verse reads: *Rebekah took the precious garments of Esau, her elder son, which*

were with her in the house, and clothed Jacob, her younger son.

253. **These are the garments Esau won from Nimrod…** Nimrod was King of Babylonia and Assyria (see Genesis 10:8–12). According to legend, his spectacular success as a hunter derived from the fact that he wore the magic clothes fashioned by God for Adam and Eve. Seeing Nimrod in these clothes, Esau coveted them and killed him for them.

See Genesis 3:21; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 24; *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:13; 65:16; Rashi on BT *Pesaḥim* 54b, s.v. *bigdo shel adam ha-rishon; Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 27:15; *Sefer ha-Yashar, Toledot*, 133; *Zohar* 1:73b, 137b, 139a; 2:39a–b, 208b.

254. **Here is written, *faint*, and there… *my soul faints before killers*** Since the verse in Jeremiah links fainting with killing, the word *faint* in the Genesis verse also implies killing. See BT *Bava Batra* 16b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:12; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 3:1.

255. **That particular day he did not take them…** On the day Isaac planned to bless him and told him to go out hunting and return with game. Lacking the magic garments, Esau did not find game effortlessly and immediately, providing Jacob time to steal his blessing.

256. **For the beauty of Jacob was the beauty of Adam…** See BT *Bava Batra* 58a: "The beauty of our father Jacob resembled the beauty of Adam." The *Zohar* transforms the Talmudic comparison into an affirmation of identity. Jacob manifested Adam's beauty, so fittingly he wore the garments fashioned by God for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Now their original fragrance was emitted once again.

See *Bava Metsi'a* 84a; *Zohar* 1:35b (where Jacob rectifies the flaw of Adam's sin), 145b–146a, 222a; *ZḤ* 65a (*ShS*).

257. **the apple of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun!** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:2: "Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Menasya, 'The apple [round fleshy part] of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun. How much more so the brightness of his face!'" See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 4:4; 12:1.

258. **Once he sinned, his beauty deteriorated, his height diminished…** See BT *Ḥagigah* 12a: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'Adam extended from earth to heaven…. As soon as he sinned, the blessed Holy One placed His hand upon him and diminished him…' Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rav, 'Adam extended from one end of the world to the other…. As soon as he sinned, the blessed Holy One placed His hand upon him and diminished him.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:6: "Rabbi Aivu said, 'His stature was reduced to one hundred cubits.'" Cf. *Zohar* 1:53b. For Iranian and Gnostic parallels, see Altmann, "The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends"; Urbach, *The Sages*, 227–32.

Rabbi El'azar's point is that Jacob's beauty matched that of Adam after he was diminished.

259. ***loveliness of YHVH…*** **beauty of Jacob** … *Loveliness* symbolizes *Binah*; *YHVH* symbolizes *Tif'eret*, the *sefirah* of Jacob, whose beauty reflects the higher *loveliness*. See *Zohar* 1:197b; 2:127a.

260. **It is not written…*the garments*, but rather… *his garments*…** Since the garments were not Jacob's, the verse should read: *the garments*, not: *his garments*. But the phrase *his garments* actually refers to God's garments, namely the *sefirot*, in which the most hidden divine reality clothes itself. When Jacob entered, Isaac smelled the fragrance of the *sefirot* enveloping him. See *Zohar* 1:224b; *ZḤ* 65a (*ShS*).

On God's garment of light, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:4; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 493–94; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 110–11; *Zohar* 1:2a, 29a, 31b,

90a (*ST*), 245a; 2:39b, 164b; and, for Greek, Iranian and Gnostic parallels, Matt, *Zohar*, 212.

261. **ויאמר (*Va-yomer*), *He said*—an anonymous word…** The unnamed subject may imply *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:102b, 115a, 138a, 173b; 2:60b, 125b, 131a.

262. ***Like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH…*** **Field of apple trees…** See BT *Ta'anit* 29b, in the name of Rav: "*He said, 'See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH.'*… Like the fragrance of a field of apple trees."

In Kabbalah the apple orchard symbolizes *Shekhinah*. She is filled with apple trees, namely, the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, who are symbolized by the three patriarchs and whose respective colors all appear in the apple: the white pulp, the red skin, and the green stem.

See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35–37; *Zohar* 1:36a, 85a–b, 122a, 128b, 139a, 143b, 224b, 249b; 2:60b, 61b; 3:74a, 84a, 133b (*IR*), 135b (*IR*), 286b–287a, 288a (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365.

Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; and *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 11: "When Jacob entered, he was accompanied by the fragrance of the Garden of Eden." The Garden also symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

263. ***May God give you of the dew of heaven…*** The verse continues: *and the fat of the earth, abundance of grain and new wine*.

264. **This verse has been established** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 66:1–3.

265. **arraying his rung** Adorning *Shekhinah* with song. She is known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom") and symbolized by David, the ideal king.

266. **making himself a name…** David enhanced and actualized *Shekhinah*, the divine name, through whom God becomes known. See *Zohar* 1:116b; 3:113a–b.

267. ***Come near, so I can feel you, my son. Are you really my son Esau*** The verse continues: *or not?*

268. **To the time when that serpent inflicted curses upon the world…** When the serpent deceived Eve, claiming falsely that God had forbidden them to eat *of any tree in the garden* and assuring her that if they did eat from the Tree of Knowledge they would not die and would *be like God*. See Genesis 3:1–5; *Zohar* 1:137b.

269. ***Go out to the field…*צידה (*tsayid*), *game*—with a ה (*he*)…** The word is spelled with an extra letter, ה (*he*), understood by Rabbi El'azar as alluding to *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the final letter of יהוה (*YHVH*). She conveys blessing.

See *Leqaḥ Tov, Sekhel Tov, Midrash Aggadah*, Radak, *Ba'al ha-Turim, Midrash ha-Gadol*, and *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.

On *Shekhinah* as "field," see above, note 262.

270. **Throne of Glory…'What if…Jacob is subjected to them?'** According to rabbinic tradition, the image of Jacob is engraved on the Throne of Glory.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:12, and Theodor, ad loc.; ibid. 82:2; *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:1; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 28:12; BT *Ḥullin* 91b; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 35; *Zohar* 1:72a; Moses de León, Munich MS 47, 338b; Wolfson, *Along the Path*, 1–62.

271. **Michael…accompanied by *Shekhinah* … Garden of Eden…** Rabbi El'azar blends two midrashic motifs. According to *Shemot Rabbah* 2:5 (in the name of Rabbi Yose): "Wherever Michael appears, there is the glory of *Shekhinah*." According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22 (in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan), "When Jacob entered his father's presence, the Garden of Eden accompanied him, as is written: *like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH* (Genesis 27:27)." The Garden symbolizes *Shekhinah*. See above, note 262.

272. **When Esau entered, Hell entered with him, so *Isaac trembled*…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 67:2: "*Isaac trembled* [*very*] *violently*…. Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'If a person has two sons, and one comes in and one goes out, does he

tremble? That would be astonishing! Rather, when Esau entered, Hell entered with him.'"

273. **he had thought that Esau was not of that side** Isaac had not realized that Esau's nature was demonic. See the description of Esau above, p. 273, and n. 113.

274. **who resembled Adam** See above, note 256.

275. **snatched from that serpent of *lying lips*...** By enticing Eve and Adam to sin, the serpent had robbed them of their paradisal blessings, which Jacob now took back.

On the serpent's lies, see above, note 268. On his insidious acts, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:3; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 1; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13.

276. **seizing from him...** Seizing from the serpent, now manifesting in Esau.

277. **measure for measure** A common phrase in rabbinic literature. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:11; BT *Shabbat* 105b.

278. **Of him is written** Of the serpent.

279. **'A serpent bites and kills—and feels no satisfaction'** Since he does not eat his victim. See JT *Pe'ah* 1:1, 16a; BT *Ta'anit* 8a; *ZḤ* 78a (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 61.

280. ***Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing...*** The verse continues: *with which his father had blessed him. Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob!"*

281. ***of heaven and... of the earth*—from above and below...** Symbolizing *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, whose union engenders blessing.

282. ***Abundance of grain and new wine*. This has been established** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 66:3.

283. ***I have never seen a righteous man forsaken...*** The verse opens: *I have been young and now I am old*.

284. ***I have been* נער (*na'ar*), *young*...uttered by the Prince of the World** By Metatron, the chief angel, also

known as נער (*na'ar*), "Youth, Lad (heavenly servant)." See BT *Yevamot* 16b: "Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥmani said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, 'This verse was uttered by the Prince of the World: *I have been young and now I am old*. Who said it? If you suggest it was the blessed Holy One, does old age pertain to Him? So David must have said it. But was he so old? Rather, you must conclude that the Prince of the World uttered it.'"

From the kabbalistic perspective, when the divine couple unites, Metatron is rejuvenated by their flow; when this union is interrupted, he wanes. Here Rabbi El'azar connects both parts of the verse: *I have been young and now I am old, and I have never seen a righteous man forsaken or his seed begging bread*. Metatron is describing the union of the divine couple: *Yesod*, known as *righteous*, is filled with emanation and united with *Shekhinah*, not *forsaken*. See *Zohar* 1:162a–b; *ZḤ* 85c (*MhN, Rut*).

On Metatron, see *Tosafot, Yevamot* 16b, s.v. *pasuq zeh;* Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 377–81; Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 73–108.

285. **Therefore he said, *abundance of grain and new wine*** Isaac's blessing refers to the rich flow of emanation conveyed by *Yesod*. The *abundance of grain* corresponds to the *bread* mentioned by Metatron.

286. ***May peoples serve you*** The verse continues: *and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, blessed those who bless you*.

287. ***All the kings of the earth brought their presents*** The verses read: *All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear the wisdom that God had put into his heart. Each brought his present*….

288. **הוה (*Heveh*), *Be*—not היה (*Heyeh*), *Be*, or תהיה (*Tihyeh*), *You will be*** The normal imperative form is היה (*heyeh*); the future is תהיה (*tihyeh*). Why this unusual form of the verb?

289. **ה (*he*) above, ו (*vav*) in the middle, then ה (*he*) last** The three letters of the word הוה (*Heveh*), *Be*, symbolize *Binah, Tif'eret*, and *Shekhinah*. *Binah* and *Shekhinah*, Divine Mother and Daughter, are symbolized by the feminine marker ה (*he*), which is also the second and the final letters of the name יהוה (*YHVH*). The third letter of this divine name is ו (*vav*), whose numerical value is six, symbolizing *Tif'eret* and the five *sefirot* surrounding Him, from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*.

Rabbi Yehudah's point is that Isaac chose this particular verbal form so that these three *sefirot* would convey power to Jacob. See *Zohar* 1:18a.

290. **dominating them, subduing them when King David arrives** See 2 Samuel 8:14: *All the Edomites became vassals of David*. According to Genesis 36:1, Edom is descended from Esau.

291. **since Israel has transgressed...*you will tear his yoke from your neck*** The full verse reads: *You* [Esau] *will live by your sword and you will serve your brother; but when you grow restive, you will tear his yoke from your neck*.

See *Targum Onqelos*, ad loc.: "When his [Jacob's] descendants transgress the words of Torah, you will remove his yoke from your neck." See *Targum Yerushalmi, Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), and Rashi, ad loc.; *Bereshit Rabbah* 67:7.

Rabbi Yose's point is that since Esau's descendants will tear off the yoke when Israel violates Torah, Israel's permanent domination of them must await the arrival of the Messiah. Here Esau symbolizes the non-Jewish world, specifically medieval Christianity.

292. ***May God give you*** The verse continues: *of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, abundance of grain and new wine*.

293. **from the side of Jacob's share** From the holy realm.

294. ***To Adam He said, 'Since you listened to the voice of your wife…*** The verse continues: *and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, saying: "You shall not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you; by painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.'*

295. **Conversely: *and of the fat of the earth*** The curse inflicted on the earth because of Adam's sin is now transformed into blessing. Adam listened to Eve's voice, while Jacob listened to Rebekah's voice (Genesis 27:8, 13).

296. ***By painful toil*…Conversely: *of the dew of heaven*** According to *Sifrei, Deuteronomy* 306, "The whole world delights in dew."

297. **tilling the earth and cultivating the field, as is said: *Foreigners…*** See *Mekhilta, Shabbeta, Ki Tissa* 1: "When Israel fulfills the will of God, their labor is performed by others, as is said: *Strangers will stand and feed your flocks; foreigners will be your plowmen and vinedressers*." See BT *Berakhot* 35b.

298. **so he would cleave to his site… and so Esau would cleave to his…** So that Jacob would cleave to his *sefirah, Tif'eret*, and Esau would cleave to Samael.

299. **while of this one is written: *will be*** In Esau's blessing, God is not mentioned.

300. **while of Esau is written: *from the fat of the earth…*** Earth precedes heaven, indicating that his blessing is less spiritual.

301. ***dew of heaven*—supernal dew flowing from the Ancient of Days…** The flow of emanation from *Keter*—the first, primordial *sefirah*—who is known as the Ancient of Days, based on Daniel 7:9: *The Ancient of Days sat,…the hair on His head like clean fleece, His throne—flames of fire*. This dew proceeds to *Tif'eret*, known as *heaven*.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 34: "Rabbi Yehudah said, '… In the time to come the blessed Holy One will bring down a dew of revival, reviving the dead…' Rabbi Tanḥum said, '… From where does it descend? From the head of the

blessed Holy One. In the time to come He will shake the hair of His head and bring down a dew of revival, reviving the dead, as is said: *I was asleep, but my heart was awake….For my head is drenched with dew* (Song of Songs 5:2).’”

See *Zohar* 1:95b, 225b, 232a; 2:176b (*SdTs*), 210a; 3:128b (*IR*), 135a–b (*IR*), 288a (*IZ*), 292b (*IZ*).

302. **Holy Apple Orchard** *Shekhinah*. See above, note 262.

303. **supernal Earth, Land of the Living** *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:65b–66a, 95b, 115a, 124b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 62 (77).

304. **Jacob, above and below; Esau, below** Jacob’s blessing pertains to both spiritual and material realms, while Esau’s is limited to the material.

305. **this one here below, but above not at all…** Esau may break free of Jacob’s domination on earth, but he can never ruin Jacob’s spiritual blessing or harm the intimate, eternal relationship between Israel and God.

306. **Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Shim’on son of Lekonya…** According to rabbinic tradition, Rabbi El’azar’s father-in-law was named Rabbi Shim’on son of Yose son of Lekonya. The *Zohar* consistently switches father and son, transforming Shim’on son of Yose into Yose son of Shim’on.

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 11:20; JT *Ma’aserot* 3:8, 50d; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:11; *Devarim Rabbah* 7:11; *Seder ha-Dorot*, s.v. Shim’on ben Yose ben Lekonya; *Zohar* 1:5a, 61b; 3:84b, 188a, 193a; *ZḤ* 10d (*MhN*), 14a (*MhN*), 22c (*MhN*).

In BT *Bava Metsi’a* 85a, the name of Rabbi El’azar’s brother-in-law is given as Rabbi Shim’on son of Issi (Yose) son of Lekonya, which would make Yose his father-in-law, as in the *Zohar*—but nowhere in rabbinic literature is he named Yose son of Shim’on. Rabbi El’azar’s own father, of course, is Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai.

307. **why the blessings Isaac bestowed upon Jacob were not fulfilled…** Rabbi Yose's question reflects the painful problem of medieval Jewry: Why is Israel (Jacob) dominated by Christian rule (Esau and Edom)? See *Zohar* 1:145a, 172a; 2:188b; 3:114b, 220b–221b.

308. **along with other blessings bestowed upon Jacob…** See Genesis 28:13–15.

309. ***The house of Jacob will be fire… the house of Esau stubble…*** The verse continues: *and they will set them on fire and consume them*.

310. ***Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac*** The full verse reads: *After Isaac finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunt*.

311. **אך יצא יצא (*Akh yatso yatsa*), *Scarcely going out, had gone out…*** Displaying typical biblical syntax, the verse combines the infinitive absolute with the past tense to emphasize that Jacob *had scarcely gone out*. However, Rabbi Shim'on, following midrashic tradition, reads the phrase hyperliterally, insisting that there were two outgoings.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 66:5, and Theodor, ad loc.; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 17; *Targum Yerushalmi, Leqaḥ Tov, Sekhel Tov*, and *Midrash Aggadah*, ad loc.

312. **when Jacob entered, *Shekhinah* entered with him** See above, note 117.

313. ***Do not eat the food of one with an evil eye*** The verse continues in parallelism: *do not desire his delicacies*. Esau, deriving from the demonic, has *an evil eye*.

314. ***He too prepared delicacies… 'Let my father get up!'*** The full verse reads: *He too prepared delicacies and brought them to his father. He said to his father, "Let my father get up and eat some of his son's game, so that you yourself may bless me."*

315. **His speech was harsh and aggressive … *Let my father get up!*** See *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 11; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:8, 66:7.

316. ***Let my father get up!*—as if he were not addressing him** By addressing his father in the third person, Esau demonstrated his disdain.

317. **When Esau entered, Hell entered with him…** See above, note 272.

318. **Since it is written: *Isaac trembled*, why *very violently?…*** See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 22; *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 13; *Bereshit Rabbah* 67:2; *Zohar* 1:144b. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:9; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Genesis, 16; Radak on Genesis 1:31.

319. ***Before you came, I blessed him. Now blessed he will remain!*** The full verse reads: *Isaac trembled very violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate of it all before you came and I blessed him? Now blessed he will remain!"*

320. **Even he, allotted share of Esau** Samael.

321. **How do we know this?… *unless you have blessed me*** Understood to mean: "unless you confirm the blessings I have received from Isaac."

See *Midrash Aggadah* and Rashi, ad loc.; Rashi on Hosea 12:5; Naḥmanides on Genesis 32:30; *Zohar* 3:45a. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 78:1.

322. ***He makes His angels spirits*** The verse means literally: *He makes winds his messengers*, but Rabbi Shim'on reads the words in their precise order to teach that angels are pure spirit.

A similar interpretation appears in *Tanḥuma, Ḥayyei Sarah* 3; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:4; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 77; *Zohar* 1:40b (*Heikh*), 81a (*ST*), 101a; 2:229b; 3:126b, 152a.

323. **when angels…descend to this world, they materialize…** See Naḥmanides on Genesis 18:1; *Zohar*

1:34a, 58a, 81a (*ST*), 98b (*ST*), 101a; 2:197a, 229b, 231a; 3:126b, 152a, 208a; *ZḤ* 81a (*MhN, Rut*).

324. **It is fitting not to deviate from the custom…** See BT *Bava Qamma* 86b: “Rabbi Tanḥum son of Ḥanilai said, ‘One should never deviate from custom, for look, Moses ascended on high and ate no bread, while the ministering angels descended below and ate bread!” These were the angels who appeared to Abraham. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:14; *Zohar* 1:102a.

325. **Since their dominion only really prevails at night…** Since demonic powers prevail only at night, the dominion of Esau, symbolizing Christianity, prevails only in exile, likened to night.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 94a; *Eikhah Zuta* 1:6; *Zohar* 2:130b.

326. **So he attacked Jacob at night, wrestling with him** Samael, Esau’s heavenly prince, attacked Jacob.

See *Tanḥuma, Vayishlaḥ* 8; *Bereshit Rabbah* 77:3; *Zohar* 1:146a, 170a.

327. ***One calls to me from Seir, ‘Watchman, what of the night?…’*** Esau and his descendants inhabited Seir (see Genesis 32:4; 36:8–9). Here the verse from Isaiah is understood as referring to Israel’s anguished cry from exile to the divine watchman: “*What of the night?* When will this dark exile come to an end?”

See BT *Sanhedrin* 94a; IT *Ta’anit* 1:1, 64a; Rashi on Isaiah 21:11; *Zohar* 2:130b.

328. **The verse should read: *unless* תברכני (*tevarekheni*), *you bless me*** The imperfect tense is more fitting. See Genesis 27:19, 31.

329. **Unless you confirm those blessings that father bestowed upon me…** So that it will be as if *you have blessed me*. See above, note 321.

330. ***Your name will no longer be Jacob, but* ישראל (*Yisra’el*), *Israel*…** The verse continues: *for* שרית (*sarita*), *you have striven, with divine and human beings, and have prevailed*. The name יעקב (*Ya’aqov*) is taken to mean: “He

grips the heel" or "He deceived [or: usurped]." See Genesis 25:26; 27:36.

331. **we must serve you** The plural subject refers to "I and my band of angels," or "I and Esau."

332. **you have been crowned above with a supernal rung…** You have attained the *sefirah* of *Tif'eret Yisra'el* ("Beauty of Israel"), above the angelic realm.

333. ***For* שרית (*sarita*), *you have striven, with* *Elohim*** The verse concludes: *and human beings, and have prevailed*. Here the plain sense of *Elohim* is "divine beings."

334. **Do you imagine he was referring to himself?** As an angel, a "divine being"?

335. **to join and couple with *Elohim*, in coupling of sun and moon** To join *Shekhinah*, known as *Elohim*. Jacob, in his new identity of Israel, has attained the rung of *Tif'eret* (symbolized by the sun), who unites with *Shekhinah* (symbolized by the moon).

336. **Therefore it is not written: *above* *Elohim*** Indicating that he prevailed over the angel.

337. ***He said*** The verse continues: *"Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with divine and human beings, and have prevailed."*

338. **as is written: *He said, 'If you listen carefully…'*** The anonymous subject of this verse from Exodus is understood to be *Shekhinah*, who calls attention to *Tif'eret*, known as *YHVH*. Similarly here in Genesis, *Shekhinah*—not the angel—renamed Jacob. See above, note 261.

339. **crowned with his rung, becoming Consummation of the Patriarchs** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:1: "Rabbi Pinḥas said in the name of Rabbi Re'uven, '… The chosen of the patriarchs is Jacob, as is said: *For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself* (Psalms 135:4).'" Cf. BT *Pesaḥim* 56a.

Jacob's *sefirah, Tif'eret*, harmonizes and completes the polar opposites, *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, symbolized by Abraham and Isaac.

See *Zohar* 1:119b, 133a, 150a, 152a (*ST*), 163b, 171b, 172b, 173b, 180a, 207a; 2:23a.

340. **a person really has two angelic messengers from above…** Corresponding to *Ḥesed* (“Love”) on the right and *Din* (“Judgment”) on the left. See BT *Shabbat* 119b; *Ta’anit* 11a; *Zohar* 1:12b, 165b; 2:106b, 239a; *ZḤ* 47a; *ZḤ* 84d (*MhN, Rut*).

Here the two angels are identified with the good and evil impulses. See BT *Berakhot* 61a; *Zohar* 1:49b, 155b, 165b, 174b; 3:263b.

341. **If one comes to purify himself…** See BT *Shabbat* 104a: “Resh Lakish said, ‘… If one comes to defile himself, he is provided an opening; if one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.’”

See BT *Yoma* 39a; *Makkot* 10b; *Zohar* 1:54a, 56b, 62a, 125b, 142a. 169b, 198b; 2:50a; 3:47a.

342. ***He causes his enemies*…that Evil Impulse…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 54:1.

343. ***Better to be lightly esteemed and have a servant*** The verse continues: *than to be self-important and lack food*.

344. ***have a servant?* The Evil Impulse** See *Zohar* 1:166a–b, 174b.

345. **Samael, power and strength of Esau, who made peace with Jacob** Samael, Esau’s heavenly guardian, made peace with Jacob following their nocturnal wrestling match.

See Genesis 32:25–33; *Tanḥuma, Vayishlaḥ* 8; *Bereshit Rabbah* 77:3; *Zohar* 1:144a, 170a.

346. **over him** Over Esau.

347. ***Who* איפה (*eiphoh*)*?*** The verse reads: “*Who was it* אפוא (*epho*), *then, that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate of it all before you came and I blessed him? Now blessed he will remain!*”

Rabbi Shim’on replaces the particle אפוא (*epho*), *then*, with its homonym: איפה (*eiphoh*), “where?” See Rashi, Ibn

Ezra, and Radak, ad loc.

348. **For *Shekhinah* stood there when Isaac blessed Jacob** See above, pages 301–2.

349. ***Who eiphoh?*** Literally, *Who, where?* Rabbi Shim'on apparently understands the phrase as meaning: "Where is the one who was here?" or "Who was here?"—interpreting איפה (*eiphoh*) as היה פה (*hayah poh*), "was here." See *OY*, Vital, and Galante.

350. ***This we have found.*** The verse continues: *See now: is it your son's robe or not?* This question is posed by Joseph's brothers to his father, Jacob, after they kidnapped and sold him.

See *Zohar* 1:185b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:19, and the Yemenite MS cited in Theodor, ad loc., 1024, n. 5; *Sekhel Tov*, Genesis 37:32.

351. **With *eiphoh* Jacob was punished... איפה (*Eiphoh*), *Where...*** The full verse reads: [*Joseph*] *said, "I am looking for my brothers. Tell me, please, where are they pasturing?"* As soon as he finds his brothers, they throw him into a pit. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 91:11.

352. חרדה גדולה (*ḥaradah gedolah*), ***violently*** Literally, [with] *a great trembling*.

353. **Hell entered with him** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 67:2: "*Isaac trembled* [*very*] *violently*.... Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'If a person has two sons, and one comes in and one goes out, does he tremble? That would be astonishing! Rather, when Esau entered, Hell entered with him.'" See above, pages 296, 302.

354. עד מאד (*Ad me'od*), ***very*** The verse reads: *Isaac trembled very violently*.

355. ***And behold, it was*** טוב מאד (*tov me'od*), ***very good*** **—Angel of Death** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:10: "Rabbi Shemu'el son of Rav Yitsḥak said, *'Behold, it was very good* —this is the Angel of Life; *And behold, it was very good*— this is the Angel of Death.'"

According to Rabbi Shemu'el, the Angel of Death is *very good* because he kills those who fail to accumulate good deeds. According to *Zohar* 2:149b, he is *very good* because the awareness of mortality stimulates a person to return to God. See 1:14a, 47a; 2:68b, 103a, 149b, 163a, 249a.

356. ***Who* איפה (*eiphoh*), *is to be baked?*** Playing on the root אפה (*'phh*), "to bake." See *Bereshit Rabbah* 67:2: "Rav Natan said in the name of Rabbi Aḥa, 'The walls of the house began to seethe [from the fire of Hell], as is written: "*Who* איפה (*eiphoh*)—who is destined ליאפות (*lei-aphot*), to be baked, here, I or my son [Jacob]?" The blessed Holy One replied, "Neither you nor your son, rather *he that hunted game* [Esau]."'"

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:11; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 10, 22.

357. ***When Esau heard his father's words*** The verse continues: *he cried out with a very great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me—me too, my father!"*

358. **How much harm was inflicted by those tears Esau shed...** The fact that he valued his father's blessing so highly and cried so plaintively moved God to reward him and his descendants with worldly blessing and dominion. Esau symbolizes both the Roman Empire and medieval Christianity.

See *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 15; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 24; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 47; *Midrash Tehillim* 80:4; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 14, 22, 28; Rashi on Psalms 80:6; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Genesis, 61; *Zohar* 1:146b; 2:12b.

359. ***Didn't, he rightly name him* יעקב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob?*** The verse continues: ויעקבני (*Va-ya'qeveni*), *He's deceived* [or: *usurped*] *me, these two times: he took* בכרתי (*bekhorati*), *my birthright, and look, now he's taken* ברכתי (*birkhati*), *my blessing!*

360. **The one who named him named him** The anonymous subject (*he*) implies *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:102b, 115a, 138a, 142b, 173b; 2:60b, 125b, 131a.

Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:8; *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 4; *Midrash Aggadah* and Rashi on Genesis 25:26; *Zohar* 1:60a, 186b.

361. **Contemptuously, he spewed a spurtle of spittle** Following a midrashic reading, Rabbi Ḥiyya interprets the word הכי (*ha-khi*), *didn't*, onomatopoetically as the sound of clearing one's throat and hawking phlegm. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 67:4: "Resh Lakish said, 'He began to hawk, like someone clearing his throat and spewing spittle from his mouth: *He said, "Ha-khi."*'"

"A spurtle" renders ציצא (*tsitsa*), perhaps derived here from Hebrew ניצוץ (*nitsots*), which means "spark" but also "squirt, spray," as in BT *Yoma* 29b; *Avodah Zarah* 76b; *Niddah* 13a.

362. **not… *Wasn't he… named*, but rather: *Didn't he…name him*** As noted above, the anonymous subject (*he*) implies a divine actor. Now Rabbi Ḥiyya emphasizes that Esau employed the active voice of the verb, directing his spittle and contempt toward the divine namer, who was responsible, as it were, for Jacob's deceptive character.

363. זה פעמים **(*zeh fa'amayim*), *this, two times!*** The phrase is usually rendered: *these two times*, but Rabbi Ḥiyya translates hyperliterally.

364. **But a single word appears two times…** The phrase *this, two times* indicates that the letters of *this* one word are transposed and reappear: first, *he took* בכרתי (*bekhorati*), *my birthright* (see Genesis 25:29–34), *and look, now he's taken* ברכתי (*birkhati*), *my blessing!* See *Zohar* 1:160a; 2:111a.

365. ***By now …we could have returned…*** The full verse, spoken to Jacob by his sons, reads: *For if we had not lingered, by now we could have returned these two times*.

366. **we could have returned without being ashamed before that man** They could have gone back to Egypt without being ashamed before Joseph for not having immediately returned the money they found in their sacks.

Alternatively, they could have returned home by now with their brother Simeon. See Genesis 42:24–35.

367. **transposing איוב (*Iyyov*), Job, into אויב (*oyev*), *enemy*…** See BT *Bava Batra* 16a: "Rabbah said, 'Job blasphemed with a tempest…, as is written: *He crushes me with a tempest*. He said before Him, "Master of the universe! Perhaps a tempest wind has passed before You, causing you to confuse איוב (*Iyyov*), Job, with אויב (*oyev*), enemy."'"

See *ZḤ* 75d (*MhN, Rut*).

368. ***Here, I have made him master over you…*** The full verse reads: *Isaac answered, saying to Esau, "Here, I have made him master over you, and all his brothers I have given him as servants, and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. For you*, אפוא (*epho*), *then, what can I do, my son?"* Rabbi Ḥiyya reads the word אפוא (*epho*), *then*, as if it were spelled איפה (*eiphoh*), meaning *where?* See above, page 306.

369. **with this world** With worldly blessings. See Genesis 27:39; above, pages 299–300.

370. **Contemplating his rung, he said…** Contemplating Esau's rung, which derived from *Gevurah* ("Power") and the harshness of *Din* ("Judgment"), Isaac spoke to him appropriately.

371. **But, *my son—my son*, precisely!—I brought this upon you…** Isaac admits that Esau's character derives from Isaac's own *sefirah: Gevurah* or *Din*. See *Zohar* 1:137b, 142a.

372. **This has not yet been fulfilled, for Esau has not served Jacob** On the contrary, Israel has been dominated by powers symbolized by Esau: Rome and medieval Christianity. See *Zohar* 1:143b, 172a; 2:188b; 3:114b, 220b–221b.

373. **Repeatedly he called him *my lord, my lord*** Jacob addresses Esau with this title in Genesis 32:5, 6, 19; 33:8, 13–15.

374. **deferring it to the end of days…** That is, Esau's service of Jacob, which was promised in Isaac's blessing. See *Zohar* 1:143b, 146a, 166b, 172a. Cf. JT *Sanhedrin* 10:1, 27d.

375. ***Time to act for YHVH*** By engaging in Torah.

376. **Rabbi Yose opened, saying, *"She opens her mouth with wisdom…*** Various interpretations of this verse are now offered.

377. **Assembly of Israel** כנסת ישראל (*Keneset Yisra'el*). In rabbinic Hebrew this phrase denotes the people of Israel. The midrash on the Song of Songs describes the love affair between the maiden (the earthly community of Israel) and her lover (the Holy One, blessed be He). In the *Zohar, Keneset Yisra'el* can refer to the earthly community but also (often primarily) to *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine counterpart of the people, the aspect of God most intimately connected with them. The lovers in the Song of Songs are pictured as the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

378. ***with wisdom—*ב (*bet*) of בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *In the beginning…*** The opening letter of the Torah, whose numerical value is two, symbolizes the second *sefirah: Ḥokhmah* ("Wisdom"). See *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), Genesis 1:1; *Zohar* 1:31b.

379. ***Torah of love…* Abraham, through whom He created the world** Abraham symbolizes *Ḥesed* ("Love"), upon which the world is based, according to a midrashic reading of Psalms 89:3: *The world is built on love*. See *Mekhilta, Shirta* 9.

According to another midrashic motif, Abraham himself constitutes the foundation of the world. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9, where Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah offers a play-full interpretation of Genesis 2:4: *These are the generations of heaven and earth* בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*, transposing the letters of בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*) into באברהם (*be-Avraham*), "through Abraham," indicating that *heaven and earth* were created for his sake.

See *Zohar* 1:3b, 86b, 91b, 93a, 105b, 154b, 230b; 3:117a.

380. **in whom He converses constantly** Divine Wisdom sustains the world by expressing love constantly. See *Zohar* 1:46a.

381. **ב (*Bet*), closed on that side, open on this side** Describing the graphic form of the letter. See JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77c; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:10; *Bahir* 11 (14–15).

382. **Closed on that side, as is written: *You will see My back*** The verse continues: *but My face will not be seen.* *Ḥokhmah* itself cannot be perceived, only its *back*, i.e., the emanation that follows it. For other interpretations, see *OY*, Galante, *KP, MmD*.

383. **to turn its face above** Toward its source, *Keter*.

384. **a portico for welcoming** The shape of the letter ב (*bet*) resembles a portico or exedra, closed on three sides and open on the fourth. See BT *Bava Batra* 25a–b: "Rabbi Eli'ezer says, 'The world resembles an exedra, and the north side is not enclosed.'"

Here, the open side of the letter symbolizes the openness of *Ḥokhmah* to the influx from *Keter*.

385. **So it stands at the head of Torah and is subsequently filled** By the other letters. See *ZḤ* 88c-d (*MhN, Rut*).

386. ***with wisdom*, literally... בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *With beginning*...** The preposition ב (*be*) can mean either "in" or "with." The opening word of Genesis is rendered by *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.) as בחוכמא (*Beḥukhma*), *With* [or: *In*] *wisdom*.

This identification of ראשית (*reshit*), *beginning*, with Wisdom appears widely. See Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:242–45, 266–69; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 81; Naḥmanides on Genesis 1:1; *Zohar* 1:2a, 3b, 15a, 16b, 20a, 145a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 21–22 (25–26); Scholem, *Major Trends*, 391, n. 80.

387. ***Torah of love on her tongue... God said, 'Let there be light!'...*** *Ḥesed* ("Love") is identified with the first

day of the week of Creation and with light, spoken into being on that day, engendered by the union of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*.

388. **ה (*he*) of the Holy Name, comprising all… concealed and revealed…** *Binah*, the Divine Mother, is symbolized by the first ה (*he*) of יהוה (*YHVH*). She is the transition between the most hidden sefirotic realms and the lower *sefirot*, to whom She gives birth and through whom everything below comes into being.

389. ***She is hidden from the eyes of all living…*** The previous verse concludes: *Where is the place of* בינה (*binah*), *understanding?* See *ZḤ* 41a.

390. **when She begins to expand through *wisdom* cleaving to Her…** When *Ḥokhmah* enters and unites with *Binah*, the Divine Mother expands and generates the lower *sefirot*, the first of whom is *Ḥesed* ("Love") and the core of whom is *Tif'eret*, known as Voice and Torah.

391. **final ה (*he*), speech, word dependent on *wisdom*** *Shekhinah,* culmination of the *sefirot*, is symbolized by the final letter of יהוה (*YHVH*). Conveying divinity, She is known as Speech. Deriving from *Ḥokhmah*, She is called Lower Wisdom.

392. **voice, presiding over speech, conducting it** *Tif'eret*. See *Zohar* 1:246b.

393. **Jacob, above *her tongue*, conducting the word, articulating Her** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who conducts *her tongue* (*Shekhinah*).

394. **no speech without voice** See *Zohar* 1:36a, 246b; 2:3a, 25b.

395. **Assembly of Israel** *Shekhinah*, known as "Lower Wisdom." On the name "Assembly of Israel," see above, note 377.

396. **Jacob, who was cunning** In obtaining Esau's birthright and blessing. When he disguised himself as Esau and came before Isaac, *Shekhinah* accompanied him. See above, note 117.

397. ***Behold, coming with the clouds…*** **King Messiah** See *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 14.

398. ***Do not fear, My servant Jacob…*** The two verses read: *Do not fear, My servant Jacob; do not be dismayed, O Israel! For I will save you from afar, your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob will return and be calm and secure, with no one frightening him. Do not fear, My servant Jacob —declares YHVH—for I am with you!* Cf. Jeremiah 30:10–11.

399. **This verse has been established** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 23:2.

400. ***from afar*—at the time to which you defer those blessings** In the far-off future.

401. **although Esau… will subjugate your children** As noted above (note 372), Esau symbolizes the Roman Empire and then medieval Christianity.

402. ***Jacob will return—Shekhinah; Jacob will return,* indeed!** The name יעקב (*Ya'aqov*), *Jacob*, alludes to *Shekhinah*, perhaps because She is the עקב (*aqev*), *heel*, i.e., the end of the flow of emanation.

See BT *Megillah* 29a: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai says, 'Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them…. When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them…. And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them, as is said: ושב יהוה אלהיך (*Ve-shav YHVH Elohekha*), *YHVH your God will return*, (*with*) *your captivity* (Deuteronomy 30:3). The verse does not read והשיב (*ve-heshiv*), *will bring back*, but rather ושב (*ve-shav*), *will return*. This teaches that the blessed Holy One will return with them from amidst the exile.'"

See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 14; *Zohar* 1:120b; 3:20b.

The conclusion ("*Jacob will return*, indeed!") may also refer to Jacob himself. See BT *Ta'anit* 5b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: "Jacob our father never died…, as is said: *Do not fear, My servant Jacob—dedares YHVH—do not be*

dismayed, O Israel! For I will save you from afar, your seed from the land of their captivity (Jeremiah 30:10). The verse compares him to his seed; just as his seed is alive, so he too is alive."

403. **from those kingdoms of Babylonia and Edom...** See *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 2. Edom, who is descended from Esau (see Genesis 36:1), symbolizes the Roman Empire and Christianity.

404. **Even a tiny word contains countless ways...** See *Zohar* 1:163a; 2:55b, 98b–99b 3:79b, 149a, 152a, 174b, 202a, 265a; *ZḤ* 6d (*MhN*). Cf. *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 336; *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 32:47; BT *Menahot* 29b.

405. **Rabbi Yoḥanan... rendered three hundred legal decisions...** This seemingly insignificant verse contains immense wisdom relating to the demonic realm. The subject of the verse is Hadar, last of the Edomite kings listed in Genesis 36, who are reinterpreted in Kabbalah as demonic archons. See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 296; and on this verse, *Zohar* 3:135b (*IR*), 142a (*IR*), 292a (*IZ*).

Rabbi Yoḥanan's manifold interpretations of this verse are mentioned in *ZḤ* 6d–7a (*MhN*); Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Pesaḥim* 62b; David ben Judah he-Ḥasid, *Mar'ot ha-Ẓove'ot*, 177.

For references to "three hundred legal decisions" in the realms of impurity, magic, and witchcraft, see *Tosefta, Sanhedrin* 11:5; BT *Sanhedrin* 68a, 106b; *Ḥagigah* 15b; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 25; *Kallah Rabbati* 6:4.

406. **These he revealed only to Rabbi** El'azar Rabbi El'azar son of Arakh, an outstanding student of Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai who engaged in speculation on the *merkavah* (the divine chariot). Although later editions of the *Zohar* read here: Rabbi Eli'ezer [son of Hurkanos], the early editions and nearly all the MSS read: Rabbi El'azar.

See the sources cited in the preceding note; M *Avot* 2:8; *Tosefta, Ḥagigah* 2:1; JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77a; BT *Ḥagigah* 14b; David Luria, *Shem ha-Eḥad Eli'ezer* (preface to *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer*), n. 4.

407. **approaching the woman, injecting her with slime** See BT *Shabbat* 145b–146a: "Rav Yosef taught: '… When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), "filth" [or: slime, lewdness].'"

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 4:1 (variants); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 21; *Zohar* 1:36b–37a, 52a, 54a, 122a, 126a–b.

408. **because of him; he inflicted death… to punish him** The pronouns could refer to the serpent, but from what follows, they apparently refer to Adam. For various applications of the phrase "inflicted death," see *Zohar* 1:12b, 35b–36b, 52a–53a, 75a, 83a, 102b, 122b, 124a, 125a, 131b.

409. **Tree of Life appeared—atoning for Adam…** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, the Tree of Life. By outwitting Esau, who symbolizes the serpent, he overcame the demonic powers and rectified Adam's sin.

See *Zohar* 1:35b; Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 45–46.

410. **when Israel offered a goat, that serpent was overturned…** On Yom Kippur one goat is offered to *YHVH* and a scapegoat bearing the sins of Israel is offered to the wilderness demon Azazel (Leviticus 16:5–10). Similarly, in the Babylonian Akitu ritual a goat, substituted for a human being, is offered to Ereshkigal, goddess of the Abyss. According to *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46, the goat is intended to preoccupy Satan: "They gave him [Satan] a bribe on Yom Kippur so that he would not nullify Israel's sacrifice."

See BT *Yoma* 20a: "On Yom Kippur, Satan has no permission to accuse. How do we know? Rami son of Ḥama said, 'השטן (*Hasatan*), Satan, equals 364 in numerical value—

implying that on 364 days he has permission to accuse, while on Yom Kippur he does not.’”

See Naḥmanides on Leviticus 16:8; *Zohar* 1:11a, 64a, 65a, 113b–114b, 138b, 139b, 142b, 174b, 190a, 210b; 2:154b, 237b, 266b; 3:63a (*Piq*), 102a, 202b–203a, 258b; *ZḤ* 87b–c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She’elot u-Tshuvot*, 49; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:890–95.

411. **Jacob offered his father two שעירין (*se’irin*), goats** See Genesis 27:9; above, pages 291–92.

412. **Esau, who is שעיר (*sa’ir*), a hairy demon** In Genesis 27:11, Esau is described as איש שעיר (*ish sa’ir*), *a hairy man*, but the word שעיר (*sa’ir*) also means “goat, demon, satyr.” Further, Esau and his descendants inhabited שעיר (*se’ir*), *Seir* (see Genesis 32:4; 36:8–9).

See Genesis 25:25; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:15; *Zohar* 1:65a, 138b, 153a; 3:64a.

413. **one for the rung on which Esau was dependent, to which he clung…** The *sefirah* of *Gevurah*, from which Esau derives. See above, pages 291–92.

414. **woman resembling Eve and a man resembling Adam…** Rebekah and Jacob, who cunningly rectified the sin of Eve and Adam. See above, pages 269–72, 299.

Esau symbolizes the serpent, ridden by Samael. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13: “Samael … took his band and descended and saw all the creatures created by the blessed Holy One. He determined that the most cunningly evil was the serpent, as is said: *Now the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had made*. He [the serpent] looked like a camel, and he [Samael] mounted and rode him.”

See *Zohar* 1:35b, 64a, 137b.

415. **as has been said** See above, pages 272–73.

416. **גבר שלים (*gevar shelim*), a consummate man, as translated** Borrowed from *Targum Onqelos*, ad loc. The

phrase איש תם (*ish tam*) means “a simple [or: innocent, plain, mild, quiet, sound, wholesome] man.”

417. ***dwelling in tents*, for he embraced two sides: Abraham and Isaac** The plural, *tents*, alludes to the two facets of Jacob’s personality. He combined the qualities of Abraham and Isaac: *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*.

418. **Jacob approached Esau from the side of Isaac…** *Gevurah*, also known as *Din* (“Judgment”), supplied Jacob with cunning. See above, pages 274–75.

419. **When Jacob aroused toward Samael, rung of Esau** Jacob’s wrestling opponent (in Genesis 32:25–30) was none other than Samael. See *Tanḥuma, Vayishlaḥ* 8; *Bereshit Rabbah* 77:3; *Zohar* 1:144a, 170a.

420. **defeated solely by the goat** Esau, symbolizing the serpent, was defeated by the trick of the two goats. See above, page 314.

421. **Even though all is one** Even though the serpent (symbolized by Esau) and Samael are one and the same, so that by defeating Esau, Jacob had actually also defeated Samael.

422. **he came** Samael came.

423. **night on which the moon was created** The eve of the fourth day of the week. See Genesis 1:14–18.

424. **Jacob remained alone, unaccompanied by anyone** See Genesis 32:25: *Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the rising of dawn*.

425. **One should not venture out alone at night, especially…** See BT *Pesaḥim* 112b: “One should not go out alone at night—neither on the eve of Wednesday nor on the eve of Sabbath—because Agrat daughter of Maḥalat [Queen of Demons] goes out together with 180,000 angels of destruction, each empowered to wreak destruction independently.”

See *Zohar* 1:169b; 2:205a; 3:45a.

426. **moon is defective… מארת (*me’orot*) … spelled deficiently** In Genesis 1:14, the word מארת (*me’orot*) is

written without vavs, the vowel letters. (Such variant spelling affects neither pronunciation nor the plain meaning of the words.) Here this deficient spelling implies that something was missing on the fourth day of Creation: the light of *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the moon, diminished; this lack represents the potential for evil or "curse": מארה (*me'erah*).

See JT *Ta'anit* 4:4, 68b: "On the fourth day [of the week: Wednesday], they would fast for infants, so that diphtheria would not enter their mouths. *God said, 'Let there be* מארת (*me'orot*), *lights'*—spelled מארת (*me'erat*), curse."

See Proverbs 3:33; BT *Ta'anit* 27b, *Ḥullin* 60b; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 5:1; *Soferim* 17:4; Rashi and *Minḥat Shai* on Genesis 1:14; *Zohar* 1:1a, 12a, 19b, 33b, 166a, 169b; 2:167b, 205a.

427. **when the moon is defective, the evil serpent is empowered...** When *Shekhinah* is weakened, the demonic dominates. See *Zohar* 1:19b, 70b.

428. **Approaching on the right, he saw Abraham** Samael encountered the power of *Ḥesed*. See *Zohar* 2:193b.

429. **approaching on the left, he saw Isaac, empowered with severe Judgment** He encountered the power of *Din*.

430. **Approaching the torso, he saw Jacob** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, torso of the divine body, fortified by both *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*.

431. **site outside the torso, one pillar of the torso** The thigh symbolizes the *sefirah* of *Netsaḥ*, one of the two pillars supporting *Tif'eret*, torso of the body.

See *Zohar* 1:21b, 166a; 2:227a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 10–12 (13–14).

432. ***Let me go!*** The verse reads: *He said, "Let me go, for dawn has risen!" He replied, "I will not let you go unless you have blessed me."*

433. **His turn had come to chant morning song; he had to leave** It was his turn to chant angelic song above.

See BT *Ḥullin* 91b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 78:1–2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:6; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 37.

434. **he confirmed the blessings and added another one…** See above, pp. 302–3 and n. 321.

435. **as is written: *God blessed Jacob*** No such verse exists. See Genesis 35:9 (cited here in one MS): *God appeared to Jacob again when he was coming from Paddan Aram, and He blessed him*.

436. **as the first one** As his father's first blessing (Genesis 27:29): *May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you*.

437. **reserving all those others for when…** See *Zohar* 1:143b, 145a–b, 166b, 172a. Cf. JT *Sanhedrin* 10:1, 27d.

438. **Look, here are three** Three encirclements, instances of *surrounded me*.

439. **this kingdom** The Messianic kingdom, manifesting the power of *Shekhinah*, known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom").

440. **rock hewn from the mountain *not by hands*** See the following verse (Daniel 2:45), where the prophet speaks to King Nebuchadnezzar: *Just as you saw that a stone was hewn from the mountain, not by hands, and that it crushed the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold*.

441. **Assembly of Israel** *Shekhinah*. See above, note 377; *Zohar* 1:246b.

442. ***And this rock that I set up as a pillar will be a house of God*** Here too the *rock* symbolizes *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:72a–b, 151a, 231a; 2:229b–230a.

443. **From here** From the following verse we learn that the other blessings will be realized in the future.

444. ***The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations… like dew…*** The verses read: *The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from YHVH…The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, in*

the midst of many peoples, like a lion among animals of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which tramples and tears as it goes, with no one to deliver.

See the reference to dew in Isaac's first blessing to Jacob: *May God give you of the dew of heaven* (Genesis 27:28).

445. ***A son*—Esau...** See *Shemot Rabbah* 46:4: "*A son honors his father*—Esau, who honored his father greatly, going out to the fields, hunting game, bringing it back, cooking it, bringing it to his father, and feeding him every day."

See *Pesiqta Rabbati* 23: "Rabbi Neḥunia said in the name of Rabbi Tanḥum son of Yudan, 'Who delayed the honor of Jacob in this world? The great honor Esau rendered to his father.'"

On Esau's honoring of Isaac, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 336; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:16; 76:2; *Devarim Rabbah* 1:15; *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Ba'al ha-Turim*, Deuteronomy 2:5.

446. ***And a servant his master*—Eliezer...** See above, pages 130–31.

447. **with so much wealth, so many presents and gifts, loaded camels** See Genesis 24:10.

448. **before he spoke his words** Describing his mission to find a wife for Isaac.

449. **subsequently, *my master, my master*** Eliezer employs this formula fourteen times in this chapter.

450. **That honor and graciousness prolonged his life enduringly** According to rabbinic tradition, Eliezer was none other than Og, King of Bashan, who lived to the age of five hundred. See *Soferim*, add. 1:2; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 16; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Numbers, 765; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Ḥuqqat 55; Bereshit Rabbah* 41(42):8 (on Genesis 14:13); *Devarim Rabbah* 1:25.

According to another tradition, Eliezer entered Paradise during his lifetime. See *Derekh Erets Zuta* 1:18;

Kallah Rabbati 3:23; *Alpha Beita de-Yen Sira*, 253, 256; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Genesis, 42, 76. Cf. BT *Bava Batra* 58a.

451. **those tears prolonged Israel's subjugation to him** See above, note 358.

1. **This verse has been established** See BT *Qiddushin* 72b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:2; *Zohar* 1:136a.

2. ***the sun rises*—Jacob** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who is also symbolized by the sun.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:10; *Zohar* 1:135a, 136a, 148a, 166a; *ZḤ* 14c, 27c (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 50 (61); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 381.

3. **Beer-sheba** The name means "well of seven" or "well of oath." Here the former meaning alludes to *Binah*, source of the seven lower *sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Shekhinah*. Jacob's presence in Beer-sheba symbolizes the "rising" of *Tif'eret* (*the sun*) to *Binah*, from whom He imbibes the flow of emanation.

4. **Haran…*He stayed there for the night because the sun had set*** Haran symbolizes *Shekhinah* based on the association of חרן (*Ḥaran*) with חרון (*ḥaron*), "wrath," linked with *Shekhinah* because She derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment"). See *Zohar* 1:147b (*Tos*). When Jacob *stayed there for the night*, he stimulated the union of the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

5. ***shining forth…*** זורח (*Zoreaḥ*), "Rising, coming forth, shining." Here Rabbi Ḥiyya understands the verb in the sense of "shining," indicating that *Tif'eret* illumines *Shekhinah*, His *place*, when he unites with Her.

In rabbinic literature, המקום (*ha-maqom*), "the place," is a name of God, emphasizing divine immanence and omnipresence. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9; Urbach, *The Sages*, 1:66–79.

6. ***toward the south… toward the north …* one is right, the other left** South symbolizes the warmth of *Ḥesed* ("Love") on the right, while north symbolizes the harshness of *Gevurah*, or *Din* ("Judgment") on the left.

7. **Every day he flows forth from the east…** The course of the sun symbolizes the path of emanation. *Tif'eret* issues from the east, which here symbolizes *Binah*, source of His illumination, apparently because of the connection

between מזרח (*mizraḥ*), "east," and the root זרח (*zrḥ*), "to shine." From there *Tif'eret* flows south (to *Ḥesed*), north (to *Gevurah*), and eventually west (to *Shekhinah*).

On the course of the sun, see BT *Bava Batra* 25a–b. Cf. ibid., 25a: "Rabbi Abbahu said, '*Shekhinah* is in the west.'"

8. **He left the sphere of the land of Israel ... *Beer-sheba*** For Rabbi Shim'on, Beer-sheba ("Well of Seven") symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who includes within Herself the flow of emanation from seven *sefirot* (*Binah* through *Yesod*, or *Ḥesed* through *Shekhinah* Herself). See Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 11. She is also identified with the land of Israel.

9. ***for Haran*—land of alien dominion** חרנה (*Ḥaranah*), *For Haran*, is here linked either with the Aramaic חרנא (*ḥorana*)—an alternative form of אחרינא (*oḥoreina*), "other"—or with the Hebrew חרון (*ḥaron*), "wrath." The realm outside of the land of Israel is dominated by harsh demonic forces. See *Zohar* 1:78b (*ST*).

10. ***shining forth there*, heading there to illumine it...** *Tif'eret* illumines *Shekhinah*.

11. **'The blessed Holy One puts on *tefillin*'** *Tefillin* ("phylacteries") consist of two black leather boxes containing passages from the Torah (Exodus 13:1–10, 11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21) written on parchment. They are bound by black leather straps on the left arm and on the head, and are worn during weekday morning services. Each of the biblical passages indicates that the Israelites should place a sign upon their hand and a frontlet (or reminder) between their eyes.

See BT *Berakhot* 6a: "Rabbi Avin son of Rabbi Adda said in the name of Rabbi Yitsḥak, 'How do we know that the blessed Holy One puts on *tefillin*? For it is said: *YHVH has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength* (Isaiah 62:8). *By His right hand*—this is Torah, as is said: *At His right hand was a fiery law unto them* (Deuteronomy 33:2). *And by the arm of His strength*—this is *tefillin*, as is said: *YHVH will give strength unto His people* (Psalms 29:11).

How do we know that *tefillin* are a strength to Israel? For it is written: *All the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of YHVH is proclaimed upon you, and they shall be in awe of you* (Deuteronomy 28:10), and it has been taught: Rabbi Eli'ezer the Great says, "This refers to the *tefillin* of the head."' Rabbi Naḥman son of Yitsḥak asked Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Avin, 'These *tefillin* of the Master of the Universe—what is written in them?' He replied, *'Who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth?'* (1 Chronicles 17:21)."

Here "the blessed Holy One" refers to *Tif'eret*.

See Isaac the Blind, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 4; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 525; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 4; Todros Abulafia, Otsar *ha-Kavod*, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:13b–14a, 141a; 3:81a, 140a (*IR*), 262a–263a, 264a, 269a–b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 235–39; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1161–65.

12. **Mystery of Supernal Father, mystery of Mother… *tefillin* of the head** *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, who constitute the head of the sefirotic body and engender all the lower *sefirot*, symbolize the *tefillin* worn on the head.

13. **'A priest receives at the head'** See BT *Nedarim* 62a, in the name of Rava: "Just as a priest receives at the head [i.e., receives his portion first], so a disciple of the wise receives at the head."

See M *Yoma* 1:2; *Zohar* 1:47b; 2:225a; *ZḤ* 43a.

14. **Beauty of Israel** תפארת ישראל (*Tif'eret Yisra'el*), the full name of *Tif'eret*.

15. **Assembly of Israel…** כנסת ישראל (*Keneset Yisra'el*). In rabbinic Hebrew this phrase denotes the people of Israel. The midrash on the Song of Songs describes the love affair between the maiden (the earthly community of Israel) and her lover (the Holy One, blessed be He). In the *Zohar, Keneset Yisra'el* can refer to the earthly community but also (often primarily) to *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine counterpart of the people, the aspect of God most intimately connected

with them. The lovers in the Song of Songs are pictured as the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

Here Rabbi El'azar refers to the ascent of *Shekhinah* toward *Binah*.

16. **World of the Male, blessed Holy One** The "World of the Male" encompasses all the *sefirot* from *Binah* through *Yesod*. Together they constitute a masculine entity (called "blessed Holy One") ready to join *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:96a, 149a, 160b, 246a–247a, 248b; 2:127b; *ZḤ* 72b (*ShS*). Cf. 1:17b, 46b, 163a; 2:4a.

17. **World of the Female, of the blessed Holy One** The "World of the Female" refers to the realm of *Shekhinah* Herself.

18. **from that world... by this world** From World of the Male… by World of the Female.

19. ***Be'er Sheva*—this Jubilee; *Be'er Sheva*—even Sabbatical...** The name *Be'er Sheva* ("Well of Seven") refers to both Jubilee and Sabbatical, which symbolize respectively *Binah* (and the entire World of the Male) and *Shekhinah* (World of the Female). The term "blessed Holy One" encompasses both. (Here the text is in disarray. I follow the reading of MSS R1 and M7.) See above, notes 3 and 8.

According to the Bible, every seventh year is a Sabbatical (Hebrew, שמטה [*shemittah*], "release"), during which the land must lie fallow and at the end of which all debts are remitted (Leviticus 25:1–24; Deuteronomy 15:1–3). In Kabbalah the Sabbatical symbolizes *Shekhinah*, seventh of the lower *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 1:153b.

In the biblical cycle, after seven Sabbaticals comes the Jubilee, proclaimed every fifty years, when slaves are released and land reverts to its original owner (Leviticus 25:8–55). In Kabbalah the Jubilee symbolizes *Binah*, who generally is characterized by the number fifty, based on BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, where Rav and Shemu'el teach: "Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the

world, all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6)." *Binah* is the source of redemption and liberation, specifically the Exodus from Egypt.

See *Zohar* 1:21b, 47b–48a 2:46a, 83b, 85b; 3:262a.

20. ***Haran*—year of foreskin** Earlier, Rabbi Shim'on had identified Haran with the demonic realm. See above, note 9. Now he adds the designation "year of foreskin," referring to the biblical prohibition against cutting off and eating the fruit of young trees during their first three years of production. See Leviticus 19:23–25.

21. **he left the holy domain** He left the land of Israel.

22. **fleeing from his brother…** From Esau, whose blessing he had stolen.

23. **Bethel, within the holy domain** Still within the land of Israel. See Genesis 28:19.

24. **The place we have mentioned, as is written…** *Shekhinah*. See above, page 320.

25. ***He stayed there for the night*… as is said: *pants, shining forth there*…** The link between the two verses is the word *there*. Just as in the verse from Ecclesiastes this word refers to *Shekhinah* (the *place*), so too here in Genesis. Jacob, symbolizing *Ti'feret*, came to illumine Her.

26. ***He took of the stones of the place*** The verse continues: *and put them at his head and lay down in that place*.

27. **It is not written: *the stones*… but rather: *of the stones*…** Not all of them, only certain ones.

28. **precious stones, fine pearls, twelve supernal stones** Symbolizing twelve angels beneath *Shekhinah, the place*. The twelve are named in *Zohar* 1:149b (*ST*).

29. ***twelve stones*** Symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel. See Exodus 28:21; 1 Kings 18:31; *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:11; *Zohar* 1:231b; 2:229b–230a.

30. **twelve thousand, myriads of hewn stones** Thousands of other ministering angels.

31. **מראשותיו (*mera'ashotav*), *at his heads*. At whose heads?** The word מראשותיו (*mera'ashotav*) appears to be in the plural: *at his heads*, or *at its heads*. See Ibn Ezra, ad loc.

32. ***At the heads* of that place** Of *Shekhinah*.

33. **three stones to the north… west… south… east…** The four *heads*, or cardinal points, stemming from *Shekhinah* are each overseen by one of the four archangels: Michael (south), Gabriel (north), Raphael (west), and Nuriel or Uriel (east), each accompanied by two subordinate angels. See *Zohar* 1:149b (*ST*).

Jacob's placement of the twelve stones corresponded precisely to the stations of these angels.

34. **Who lay upon it? The sun** Jacob's lying down on the bed stimulates and symbolizes the union of *Tif'eret* (the sun) and *Shekhinah*. See above, note 2.

35. ***He sat up on the bed*, for he and no one else was entitled to this** Jacob attained the status of "husband" of *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:21b, 133a, 138b, 226b, 236b; 3:187b.

36. **Ramification** אפיקותא (*Afiquta*), "Neck, the upper portion of a palm tree," where ramification starts. Perhaps a majestic palm tree, or one cut off at its point of ramification, stood at the entrance of the cave. Here teachings of Torah soon begin to ramify.

On this term, see BT *Sukkah* 13a; *Niddah* 24a; *Arukh*, s.v. *afquta; ZḤ* 15d (*MhN*); *KP*.

37. **This intensity of the sun derives from the south** The son's comment on the intense heat suggests the dynamics of the *sefirot:* the sun symbolizes *Tif'eret*, whose heat derives from *Ḥesed*, symbolized by the south. See above, pages 320–24; *Zohar* 2:24a; 3:218a.

38. **wind is vitality, consummation of all directions…** The word רוח (*ruaḥ*) means both "wind" and "spirit." It symbolizes *Tif'eret*, the central *sefirah*, who

represents harmony and balance. See *Sefer Yetsirah* 3:3; BT *Gittin* 31b.

39. **If not for Jacob…** Who also symbolizes *Tif'eret*. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:4: "Rabbi Berekhiah said, 'Heaven and earth were created only for the sake of Jacob.'"

40. **When his sons unified supernal unification…** According to Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish, the opening line of the *Shema* (*Hear O Israel! YHVH our God, YHVH is one!*) was recited by Jacob's (Israel's) sons, demonstrating to him that they believed in the one God. See BT *Pesaḥim* 56a.

According to Kabbalah, the six words of this verse symbolize the six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*, and by reciting them meditatively one unites all these *sefirot* in preparation for their union with *Shekhinah*. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:971–74.

41. **Jacob… took his house…** According to the same Talmudic passage (BT *Pesaḥim* 56a), Jacob responded to his sons' declaration of faith with what became the second line of the *Shema:* ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד (*Barukh shem kevod malkhuto le-olam va-ed*), "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever." In Kabbalah these six Hebrew words allude to angels surrounding *Shekhinah* (who is also known as *Malkhut* ["Kingdom"]) in six directions: north, south, east, west, above, and below.

By reciting this line, Jacob united *Shekhinah* ("his house") with Her retinue of angels and initiated Her into union with the six unified *sefirot*, whose dominant triad is *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the three patriarchs.

See *Zohar* 1:12a, 18b; 2:139b; 3:264a.

42. **Moses spoke like someone enjoining his house…** Moses commanded *Shekhinah*. See Numbers 12:7: *Throughout My house he* [Moses] *is trusted*.

See *Midrash Tehillim* 90:5, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish: "Why was he [Moses] called איש האלהים (*ish ha-elohim*), *man* [or: *husband*] *of God* (Psalms 90:1)? Just as a husband can, if he wishes, either nullify his wife's

vow or confirm it, as is said: אישה (*Ishah*), *Her husband, may confirm it, her husband may nullify it* (Numbers 30:14), so, as it were, Moses said to the blessed Holy One, *Arise, O YHVH! Return, O YHVH!* (ibid. 10:35–36)."

On Moses as "man [or: husband] of *Elohim*," see *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, nispaḥim, Vezot Haberakhah*, 443–44, 448 (variants); *Tanḥuma, Vezot Haberakhah* 2 (*Ets Yosef*, ad loc.); *Devarim Rabbah* (Lieberman), on 33:1; *Zohar* 1:6b, 21b–22a, 152a–b, 236b, 239a; 2:22b, 235b, 238b, 244b (*Heikh*).

According to rabbinic tradition, after encountering God on Mount Sinai, Moses abstained from sexual contact with his wife and maintained union with *Shekhinah*.

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 99; BT *Shabbat* 87a; *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 13; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 7:6; *Zohar* 1:22a, 152b, 234b; 2:222a; 3:148a, 180a.

43. **inviting the King along with the Queen…** Inviting King *Tif'eret* and Queen *Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by the ark. See Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 232–33; *Zohar* 1:36a; 3:242a.

On David bringing the ark to the City of David, see 2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 15.

44. **whoever invites a king should alter his behavior** See *Zohar* 3:242a.

45. **redheaded regal jesters** בדיחי רופינוס (*Bediḥei rufinus*). Rufinus is a Roman name derived from the Latin *rufus*, "red-haired." The name is shared by various early Christian saints, a fourth-century Roman minister, and Tineus Rufus, the second-century governor of Palestine ordered by Emperor Hadrian to crush the Jewish rebellion.

On Tineus Rufus, see JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14b; *Ta'anit* 4:5, 69b; BT *Sanhedrin* 65b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 11:5; *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 33, *Terumah* 3.

In the *Zohar, rufinus* refers to a royal official. See 2:36b, 40a, 68a, 85a, 175a. For the medieval Castilian usage, see

Corominas, *Diccionario*, s.v. *rufián*. Cf. Aramaic, רופילא (*rufila*), "high official."

46. **commanders** פרדשכי (*Pardashkei*). See BT *Shabbat* 94a; *Megillah* 12b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 94:9; *Zohar* 2:8b, 36b; 3:144b (IR); *Tosefot he-Arukh ha-Shalem*, 336, s.v. *pardakhsh*.

47. **if not, then he himself, for the king's amusement** As David himself danced before God. See 2 Samuel 6:14–23.

In thirteenth-century Castile, King Alfonso X (1252–1284) sang to the Virgin Mary, imagining himself as her troubadour. In his *Cantigas de Santa María* (1:102, 19–26) he chants: "I wish today to be her Troubadour, and I beg that she will desire me for her Troubadour and will want to receive my song."

48. **The verse should read: *May Your Levites sing for joy...*** The Levites, not the priests, were the ones who sang in the Temple, delighting God. See *Zohar* 1:103b, 142b, 230b; 3:48b, 121b (*RM*).

49. **and *faithful*** Aramaic, וחסידי (*va-ḥasidei*), corresponding to the biblical Hebrew וחסידיך (*va-ḥasidekha*), *and Your faithful*. In Kabbalah the priests symbolize the *sefirah* of *Ḥesed*, while the Levites symbolize *Gevurah*.

50. **when invited out he should fulfill the will of his host...** See BT *Pesaḥim* 86b, in the name of Rav Huna: "Whatever the host tells you, do—unless he says, 'Get out!'"

51. **I will not even use My own vessels, but yours instead** God accepts David's arrangement of having the priests sing instead of His usual singers, the Levites. See *Tanḥuma, Beha'alotekha* 6.

52. **If I walked this way just to hear this, I am satisfied!** Similar exclamations appear in rabbinic literature and often in the *Zohar*. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 6:2; *Qohelet Zuta* 5:17; BT *Berakhot* 16a, 24b; *Shabbat* 41a; *Zohar* 1:2a, 164b, 240a; 2:99a, 121b, 122a, 193b; 3:26a; *KP*, 1:20d.

53. ***Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife*** The verse continues: *and they become one flesh*. Correspondingly, Jacob left his parents and went to Haran in search of a wife.

54. ***Jacob left Beer-sheba…* alluding to when Israel left the Temple…** Beer-sheba symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who dwelt in the Temple, while Haran stands for the Diaspora. See above, note 9.

55. ***He encountered a certain place…*** The verse concludes: *He took of the stones of the place and put them at his head and lay down in that place*.

56. **A king who comes to visit his consort must למפגע (*le-mifga*), entreat, her** See *Zohar* 1:49a–b; 3:225b. Cf. *Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ* 2; *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9; BT *Berakhot* 26b; *Zohar* 1:165a.

57. **piece of abandoned property** הפקירא (*Hephqeira*), "Ownerless property." On the connection between the root פקר (*pqr*) and sexuality, see M *Yevamot* 13:1; BT *Yevamot* 61b, 66a; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Deuteronomy 25:5.

58. **elaborately embroidered bolsters in a spacious palace** כסתותי מרקמאן באפלייטא (*Kastutei meraqqeman be-applaita*), "Cushions embroidered in *applaita*." The last word apparently derives from the Greek *plateia*, "an open place," though the author may have in mind פלטין (*palatin*), "palace," derived from the Greek *palation*. See Galante. The original reading, however, could have been אפליקטא (*appliqta*), "embroidery," derived from the Greek *poikilton*, yielding a phrase: "bolsters embroidered with embroidery," with no mention of the palace. My rendering here interweaves both readings.

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 11:8; ibid., ed. Buber, 84b, n. 88; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:1; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:11, 4:13; *Arukh ha-Shalem*, s.v. פלקט (*plqt*); *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 173; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1359. Cf. the rare word at the beginning of this story (note 36): אפיקותא (*afiquta*).

59. **castle** קסטירא (*Qastira*), derived from the Latin *castrum* (pl. *castra*), "fortress, castle." See *Zohar* 1:29a, 30a, 62a (*Tos*), 85a, 128a.

60. **he should leave his and spend the night there…** See *Zohar* 1:49b; 3:242a.

61. **as soon as he came to Her** As soon as Jacob, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, came to *Shekhinah, the place*.

62. **With such pearls in your hands…** For similar expressions, see BT *Ḥagigah* 3a; *Bava Batra* 123a.

63. **wedding celebration of this son of mine** A little earlier, this son had cited an appropriate verse from Genesis: *Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife*.

64. **All pertains to the blessed Holy One** The biblical account of Jacob's journey alludes to the inner dynamics of the *sefirot*.

65. **forty years he fasted over Jerusalem…** See BT *Gittin* 56a: "Rabbi Tsadok sat fasting for forty years so that Jerusalem would not be destroyed. [He grew so thin that] when he ate anything, it could be seen from outside [as it passed through his throat]. When he regained his strength, they used to bring him dried figs; he sucked the juice and threw them away." See *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:31.

66. **stayed with his wife** Fulfilling the verse he had cited: *Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife* [*and they become one flesh*].

67. **it is our custom that everyone… offers them gifts…** See *Kallah Rabbati* 1:9; *Zohar* 3:96b.

68. **one concerning prophecy and two concerning dreams** It is unclear precisely how the following mysteries divide up according to this scheme. Several witnesses read here (continuing into the following paragraph): "one concerning prophecy, one concerning dreams, and he said, 'What is the difference between prophecy and dream?'"

69. **He said** Rabbi Tsadok's son begins a long homily.

70. **Prophecy derives from World of the Male** From the constellation of *sefirot* ranging from *Binah* through *Yesod*, specifically from *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*.

On the phrase "World of the Male," see above, note 16.

71. **from World of the Female** From *Shekhinah* and the powers beneath Her.

72. **from one to the other, a descent of six rungs** The six rungs apparently are: *Netsaḥ, Hod, Yesod, Shekhinah*, and the first two archangels, Michael and Gabriel. As Rabbi Tsadok soon explains, Gabriel transmits dreams.

The connection between the number six and dreams derives from BT *Berakhot* 57b: "A dream is one-sixtieth of prophecy."

See *Zohar* 1:149a (*ST*), 183a, 191b, 196a, 238a.

73. **Prophecy, on the right and the left** Deriving from *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*, right and left legs of the sefirotic body.

74. **dream, on the left** Deriving from Gabriel, angel of the left side, associated with *Gevurah*.

75. **countless rungs below** Lower angelic powers who convey dreams.

76. **corresponding to one's rung, he sees...** Each person sees dreams corresponding to his level of virtue. See JT *Ma'aser Sheni* 4:6, 55b: "Rabbi Yose said, '... A person dreams corresponding to who he is.'" See *Zohar* 1:183a, 194a.

77. **Prophecy spreads only in its domain** Only in the land of Israel. This statement by the son of Rabbi Tsadok corresponds with the tradition attributed to Rabbi El'azar son of Tsadok in *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1: "*Shekhinah* is not revealed outside the land [of Israel], for it is said: *Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of YHVH* (Jonah 1:3). Was he fleeing *from the presence of YHVH*? Has it not already been said: *Where can I go from Your spirit?* [*Where can I flee from Your presence?*] *If I ascend to heaven, You are there*. [*If I make my bed in Sheol, here You are*]...(Psalms

139:7–8). Rather, Jonah said, 'I will go outside the land, where *Shekhinah* is not revealed.'"

See ibid.: "Until the land of Israel was chosen, all lands were suitable for divine speech; once the land of Israel was chosen, all other lands were eliminated."

78. ***He dreamed: Here, a ladder set up on earth, its head reaching to heaven*** The verse continues: *—and here, angels of God ascending and descending on it*.

79. היה היה **(*Hayoh hayah*), *Happening it happened*** This phrase combines the infinitive and finite forms of the verb "to be."

80. **prophecy happened at that particular moment…** The unusual phrase, *happening it happened*, implies a unique event. When *Shekhinah* appeared to Ezekiel in Babylon, it was the first time She had ever appeared outside the land of Israel, but this was an emergency the stunned people in exile had to be comforted and reassured.

See *Zohar* 1:85a; 2:2a–b, 5a, 82a; Moses de León, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 58–59. Cf. *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1; BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 25a.

81. ***Shekhinah*** **descended among Israel in exile** See BT *Megillah* 29a: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai says, 'Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them… When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them…And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them.'" See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 14.

82. **even though that site was unsuitable** Being outside the land of Israel.

83. **moving above, moving below** The ladder symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who moves up or down, depending on human action, as explained below.

The word נטיל (*nateil*) can mean "moving" or "taking/receiving." According to the latter sense (adopted

by several commentators), *Shekhinah* receives the flow of emanation and prophecy from above, and the arousal of virtuous human conduct below.

84. ***Nehar Kevar, the River Kevar… kevar,* already—previously** The prophet Ezekiel experienced his vision at the River Kevar, a stream near Nippur in Babylon. In Hebrew, though, the word כבר (*kevar*) means "already," "long ago," so the son of Rabbi Tsadok sees here an allusion to the River of Already, the primordial river issuing from Eden.

See *Re'uyyot Yeḥezqel*, ed. Gruenwald, 111–14; Matt, *Essential Kabbalah*, 126, 205; *Zohar* 1:6b, 85a.

On the relation between prophetic revelation and the purity of water, see *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1 (citing Daniel 8:2; 10:4; Ezekiel 1:3); *Zohar* 1:222b; Idel, in *Sinai* 86 (1979): 1–7.

85. ***Shekhinah* dwelled on it…*A river issues from Eden…*** The river of emanation flows from the highest *sefirot* to water the garden of *Shekhinah*.

86. **This is one of those four rivers** The River Kevar is identified with the Euphrates, one of the four riverheads issuing from the primordial river of Eden. See Genesis 2:14; *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:3, in the name of Rabbi Yudan.

87. **Holy Jacob, Consummate Patriarch** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:1: "Rabbi Pinḥas said in the name of Rabbi Re'uven, '… The chosen of the patriarchs is Jacob, as is said: *For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself* (Psalms 135:4).'" Cf. BT *Pesaḥim* 56a.

Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who harmonizes and completes the polar opposites, *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, symbolized by Abraham and Isaac. See *Zohar* 1:119b, 133a, 144b, 150a, 152a (*ST*), 163b, 171b, 172b, 173b, 180a, 207a; 2:23a.

88. **In such a sacred site…** In Bethel, within the land of Israel. See above, page 323.

89. **Jacob was not yet married** So he was still incomplete and unfit for prophecy. See BT *Yevamot* 63a: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'Any man without a wife is not a man.'"

Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:2; *Zohar* 1:55b, 165a; 3:5a, 7b, 34a.

90. **Isaac was still alive** So *Shekhinah* rested primarily upon him.

91. **But there the place proved decisive** Since Jacob was then outside the land of Israel, he could not experience full prophetic vision.

92. **consummating the essence of the house and the joyous mother…** By then Jacob had married both Rachel and Leah, who symbolize respectively *Shekhinah* ("essence of the house") and *Binah* (Divine Mother).

The phrases "essence of the house" and "joyous mother of children" derive from Psalms 113:9: *He settles* עקרת הבית (*aqeret ha-bayit*), *the barren woman, in her home as a joyous mother of children*. עקרת (*Aqeret*), "Barren woman," is reinterpreted as עיקר (*iqqar*), "essence."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 71:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 20:2; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayetse* 15; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:8; *Zohar* 1:29a–b, 50a, 154a, 157b, 158b.

93. **from another, higher rung** Directly from *Shekhinah*, who is known both as *Elohim* (*God*) and *night*.

94. **Dream is transmitted by Gabriel, who stands below…** See above, note 72.

95. **Vision, by the rung of that creature who rules the night** Prophetic vision derives from *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*, and is transmitted by *Shekhinah*, who rules the night.

96. **Look at what is written: *Gabriel, help this man understand the vision*** Implying that Gabriel, not *Shekhinah*, conveys prophetic vision.

97. ***I appeared*** The verse continues: *to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through El Shaddai*.

98. ***El Shaddai*** אל שדי, "God of *Shaddai*." *Shaddai* is an obscure divine name, which may mean "of the mountain." The traditional rendering "Almighty" is unjustified. In Kabbalah this name denotes *Shekhinah*.

99. ***mar'ah*, a mirror, displaying another image… all supernal images** *Shekhinah* reflects the images of the higher *sefirot* and specifically the image of Her partner, *Tif'eret*, known as יהוה (*YHVH*). See *Zohar* 1:88b, 91a, 183a.

100. **So at that time** When he was still unmarried.

101. **rung on which other rungs depend** *Shekhinah*, from whom lower rungs and powers derive. See *Zohar* 1:74a.

102. ***head of the bed*** The verse, describing Jacob on his deathbed, concludes: *Israel bowed at the head of the bed*.

103. **He is the *head* of this *bed*, which shines from Him** The *head of the bed* and "head of that ladder" is *Yesod*, linked with *Shekhinah* and illumining Her.

See *Zohar* 1:225b, 226b. On *Shekhinah* as bed, see also above, page 324.

104. ***Reaching to heaven*, for He is consummation of the body…** *Yesod*, the divine phallus, is the consummation of the male sefirotic body and links *Tif'eret* (*heaven*) with *Shekhinah*. Similarly, in the human male body, the covenant of circumcision constitutes the consummation, linking lower with upper.

105. **deputies of all nations who ascend and descend on this ladder** According to rabbinic tradition, the seventy nations of the world are governed by angels or heavenly princes appointed by God.

See Daniel 10:20; Septuagint, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; Jubilees 15:31–32; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 11:8, Deuteronomy 32:8–9; *Tanḥuma, Re'eh* 8; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 9:19; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 24; *Zohar* 1:46b, 61a, 84b, 108b; 2:33a, 151b; 3:298b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:204–5, n. 91.

In midrashic literature these angels are described as ascending and descending Jacob's ladder. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 23:2; *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 2.

106. **When Israel sins, this ladder is lowered and they ascend** Israel's sins weaken *Shekhinah*, making Her vulnerable to the foreign deputies, who mount Her and gain power. See *Zohar* 1:84b; 2:6a–b.

107. **Here Jacob saw in his dream dominion of Esau…** See the sources cited above, end of note 105. Esau symbolizes the Roman Empire and medieval Christianity.

108. **בו (*bo*), *because of him*** Usually translated: *on it*. The Hebrew preposition ב (*be*) means "on, in," but also "with, through, on account of, because," as in Genesis 18:28; Deuteronomy 24:16. The pronominal suffix ו (*vav*) can mean either "it" or "him."

109. **when its head withdraws, the ladder is subdued…** When *Yesod* withdraws from *Shekhinah*, interrupting their union, She is lowered and exploited by the foreign deputies.

110. **All is one word** Both renderings of the verse—*ascending and descending on it* and *ascending and descending because of him*—yield a similar meaning.

111. ***God appeared to Solomon… and said to him…*** The verse reads: *YHVH appeared to Solomon… and God said…*

112. **What authority does a dream have to do this?** The angel Gabriel, in charge of dreams, is not authorized to offer divine gifts.

113. **here rung merged with rung—upper rung with lower rung** The wording *God appeared to Solomon in a dream by night* implies that *Shekhinah* (called *Elohim* [*God*] and symbolized by *night*) merged with the prince of dreams, though She did not yet appear to Solomon in an unmediated fashion.

114. ***increased*** תרב (*Terev*), *Surpassed*. The verse reads: *The wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the children of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.* *Shekhinah*, who derives from *Ḥokhmah* ("Wisdom"), is called in Kabbalah "Wisdom of Solomon."

115. **moon became full** According to the Midrash, just as the moon does not become full until the fifteenth day of its cycle, so it remained incomplete until the glorious reign of Solomon in the fifteenth generation from Abraham. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 5:12; and *Shemot Rabbah* 15:26: "When Solomon appeared, the disk of the moon became full."

See *Zohar* 1:73b, 74a, 223a, 225b, 249b; 2:85a; 3:61a; *ZḤ* 83b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 342. In Kabbalah the moon symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

116. ***who had appeared to him twice*** The verse reads: *YHVH became angry with Solomon because his heart turned away from YHVH, God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice*. See 1 Kings 9:2; and *Nefesh David* on this passage, cited in *NZ*.

117. **aspect of dream excelled that of all other humans…** Solomon's dreams excelled all others since *Shekhinah* conveyed Her wisdom through Gabriel.

118. **Because the sacred covenant was violated … foreign women** See 1 Kings 11:1–13. By cohabiting with foreign women, Solomon violated the covenant of circumcision, symbolizing *Yesod*, the divine phallus. He thereby ruined the union of the divine couple, impairing *Shekhinah* (symbolized by the moon).

On the link between the covenant of circumcision and divine vision, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:2; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8; *Zohar* 1:88b–89a, 91a–b, 97b–98b Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48; idem, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 342, 357–59, 396–97; idem, "Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah," 186–88.

119. ***adei ad, until forever… the heavens over the earth*** The word *ad* (*forever*) alludes to *Yesod*, who links the divine couple, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, symbolized respectively by heaven and earth. See *Zohar* 1:50a, 247b; 2:22a.

120. ***Here, YHVH… was standing upon it*** The verse continues: *and He said, "I am YHVH, God of Abraham your*

father and God of Isaac: the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your seed."

121. **he saw the cluster of faith as one** Jacob saw the full spectrum of *sefirot* arrayed upon the ladder, *Shekhinah*.

122. ***pillar of salt*** The verse describes what happened when Lot and his family escaped the destruction of Sodom: *His wife looked behind him, and she became a pillar of salt*.

123. ***God of Abraham... God of Isaac...* on the right and the left** These two patriarchs symbolize *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, the right and left divine arms embracing *Shekhinah*.

124. ***Here, YHVH was standing* עליו (*alav*), *upon him*—upon Jacob** The word עליו (*alav*) can be rendered *upon it* (the ladder) or *upon him* (Jacob), as noted in *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:3.

125. **so that all would become a holy chariot: right, left, Jacob in their midst** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 47:6: "Resh Lakish said, 'The patriarchs themselves constitute the [divine] Chariot.'"

Here the three patriarchs (Abraham on the right, Isaac on the left, and Jacob between them) symbolize the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, which serves as a chariot for the higher *sefirot*.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:3; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 57; *Zohar* 1:60b, 99a, 154b, 173b, 248b; 2:144a; 3:38a, 99a.

126. **Assembly of Israel linking with them...*the land*** The verse concludes: *the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your seed. The land* symbolizes *Shekhinah*, also known as Assembly of Israel (see above, note 15).

Shekhinah completes the chariot, serving as the fourth leg of the divine throne. See the citations in the preceding note; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittaḥon*, 396; *Zohar* 1:5b, 20a, 89b (*ST*); Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 32:10.

127. ***the land on which you lie*** The verse continues: *I will give to you and to your seed*.

128. **he would become Consummation of the Patriarchs** Balancing *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, and entitled to *lie* on *the land*, to unite with *Shekhinah*. See above, note 87.

129. **the extra ו (*vav*)...revealing that Jacob embraces both sides** The letter ו (*vav*), *and*—whose numerical value is six—alludes to Jacob's *sefirah, Tif'eret*, core of the six *sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Yesod*. The fact that the *vav* (*and*) is attached to *God of Isaac* indicates that Jacob (symbolizing *Tif'eret*) is also linked to Isaac (symbolizing *Gevurah*).

130. **nothing more is said explicitly** The formula *God of Jacob* does not appear, and the patriarch's sefirotic role is not mentioned.

131. ***There he set up an altar, and the God of Israel called him God*** *The God of Israel* means "the God of Jacob." Now that the patriarch is married, this formula can appear and Jacob's divine status be celebrated. He has attained the rung of *Tif'eret Yisra'el* ("Beauty of Israel"), partner of *Shekhinah*.

The verse is usually translated: *There he* [Jacob] *set up an altar* ויקרא לו אל אלהי ישראל (*va-yiqra lo El Elohei Yisra'el*), *and called it God, God of Israel*. The radical interpretation here derives from BT *Megillah* 18a: "Rabbi Aḥa said in the name of Rabbi El'azar, 'How do we know that the blessed Holy One called Jacob "God"? Because it says: *The God of Israel called him God*. For if you imagine that Jacob called the altar "God," then the verse should read: *Jacob called it* [*God*]. Rather, *He called him*, namely Jacob, *God*. And who called him *God*? *The God of Israel*.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 79:8, and Theodor, ad loc.; Rashi, Naḥmanides, Baḥya ben Asher, and Recanati on Genesis 33:20; *Zohar* 1:138a; 3:86a. For various readings of the verse here, see *OY, KP, Sullam, MmD*, Mopsik.

132. **whoever is incomplete below is incomplete above** Whoever remains unmarried cannot penetrate the divine realm.

133. **Jacob is different, for he was complete, but not openly** Even before marrying, Jacob's sefirotic role is intimated in the phrase *God of Abraham your father and God of Isaac*.

134. ***Here, I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go*** Implying that Jacob was already intimate with God and worthy of His protection.

135. **in the supernal world** To fully attain the rung of *Tif'eret*.

136. **Is it any wonder that he didn't know?** This being Jacob's first encounter with God.

137. ***va-anokhi, and I...sweetened the face of YHVH*** The idiom "sweeten the face" means "entreat the favor." *The face of YHVH* denotes *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, who is also known as אנכי (*Anokhi*), *I*, because through Her the divine reveals itself, declaring "I am."

138. ***She said, "If so, why Anokhi?"*** The verse, describing Rebekah, reads: *The children jostled each other within her, and she said, "If so, why* אנכי (*anokhi*), *should I live?" So she went to inquire of YHVH*.

139. **Rebekah saw the radiance of *Shekhinah* in her dwelling** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 60:16: "As long as Sarah existed… the lamp would burn in her tent from one Sabbath eve until the next. As soon as she died, it went out. As soon as Rebekah arrived, it returned."

See *Zohar* 1:50a, 133a.

140. ***She went to inquire of YHVH*, leaving this rung... *Why Anokhi?*** Suffering pangs, Rebekah left the rung of *Anokhi* (*Shekhinah*) and sought the rung of *YHVH* (*Tif'eret*).

141. **alone** Single.

142. ***He was awestruck, and said, "How awesome is this place!"*** The verse continues: *This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven!*

143. **that *place* mentioned previously** *Shekhinah*. See above, page 320.

144. **this sign of the sacred covenant, which must not stagnate** *Yesod*, the divine phallus, symbolized by the covenant of circumcision, must be continuously active, uniting with *Shekhinah*.

145. **Although these are two aspects, it is one** *Shekhinah* and Yesod are intimately linked, so the expression *this place* alludes to both.

146. ***this* must not stagnate; *this* must not exist alone** The Hebrew pronoun זה (*zeh*), *this*, denotes *Yesod*, which must continually unite with *Shekhinah*. Similarly, the human male must seek his sexual partner.

147. ***house of God*** *Shekhinah*, who contains all the other *sefirot*.

148. **creating fruit within it** The union of *Yesod* and *Shekhinah* engenders souls. See *Bahir* 14 (22); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489, 504; *Zohar* 1:15b, 19a, 33a, 59b–60a, 82b, 85b, 115a; 2:223b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 51; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69). Cf. Ibn Ezra on Psalms 1:3.

149. **smooth members...** Rendering two senses of one term, שייפי (*shaifei*). Deriving from a root meaning "to smooth, rub, slip," the word signifies "limbs" in the *Zohar*, perhaps based on the Talmudic expression (BT *Sotah* 7b) איבריה לשפא על (*al eivreih le-shafa*), "each limb entered its socket"—"slipping" into place—or "... the chest."

See *Arukh*, s.v. *shaf;* Rashi, ad loc., and on Job 33:21, citing *Ḥullin* 42b; *Zohar* 3:170a.

Here the word refers to the sefirotic limbs, all of which emanate through *Yesod* into *Shekhinah*.

150. **this is the gate of the whole body... *this is the gate of heaven!*...** *Yesod*, the divine phallus, is the gate of the *sefirot*, specifically of *Tif'eret*, who is the core of the *sefirot* and known as גופא (*gufa*), "body" (or "torso") and *heaven*.

151. **Above, as written: *this is the gate of heaven!*** Indicating that *Yesod* is fastened to *Tif'eret* (*heaven*) above.

152. **Below, as written: *This is none other than the house of God!*** Indicating that He is fastened to *Shekhinah* (*the house of God*) below.

153. **Yet human beings do not consider its precious glory…** They remain unaware of the wondrous quality of *Yesod* and the profound significance of sexuality, through which one becomes fulfilled, linked with the divine.

154. **His father came and kissed him** Rabbi Tsadok kisses his younger son, who has just completed a long homily, which began above, page 329.

155. **I accompanied them for three parasangs** According to Rav Sheshet (BT *Sotah* 46b), one should escort his teacher a distance of a parasang. A distinguished teacher, however, is to be escorted for three parasangs. (The Greek parasang equals about 3.5 miles.)

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 18:5; *Bereshit Rabbah* 32:10; *Zohar* 1:51a, 87a, 96b; 2:14a, 164a, 187a; 3:8b.

156. **May your words not be in vain!** Since you taught how vital it is to marry, you should immediately fulfill what you said!

157. **these words all inhere in a mystery of wisdom…** The words of the Bible convey secrets of divine life. See above, page 328.

158. ***Jacob made a vow…*** This and the following verse read: *Jacob made a vow, saying, "If Elohim will be with me and watch over me on this way that I go and give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return in peace to my father's house, then YHVH will be to me Elohim*.

Elohim is a divine name whose various sefirotic connotations are clarified below.

159. **promised him all this** As indicated in Genesis 28:15: *Here, I am with you, I will protect you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you*.

160. **Now, some dreams are true and some are false…** See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), intro, 125–26: *"If Elohim will*

be with me… And if not, he would not have believed? Rather, Jacob thought, 'I don't know if it is merely a dream —and there is no dream without nonsense—or if it is a [prophetic] vision.' So he said, 'May He do so for me!'"

A rabbinic tradition in BT *Berakhot* 55b states that angels convey prophetic dreams, while demons convey false ones. See ibid. 55a: "Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai, 'Just as there cannot be wheat without straw, so there cannot be a dream without nonsense.' Rabbi Berekhiah said, 'Though part of a dream is fulfilled, the whole of it is not fulfilled.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:12: "*He* [Jacob] *dreamed* (Genesis 28:12). Rabbi Abbahu said, 'Dreams have no effect at all.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:2: "Rav Huna said in the name of Rabbi Aḥa, '*Here, I am with you* (Genesis 28:15); *If Elohim will be with me*. From here we learn that a righteous person has no assurance in this world.'"

See *Zohar* 1:83a, 130a–b, 183a, 199b–200a; 2:130a, 264a (*Heikh*); 3:25a, 156b.

161. **I will draw blessings from the bubbling spring… to… *Elohim*** I will attain the rung of *Tif'eret*, known as יהוה (*YHVH*), and thereby convey the stream of emanation from the upper sefirotic source to *Shekhinah*, known as *Elohim*.

162. **Israel, being in the middle, receives all…** Israel, or Jacob, symbolizes *Tif'eret*, situated in the middle of the *sefirot*. He receives the entire flow of emanation from the sefirotic source above.

163. **this site** *Shekhinah*, known as *Elohim*.

164. **connecting the nexus of all with Him** Connecting Yesod with *Shekhinah*. *Yesod* is the cosmic link, joining all the higher *sefirot* together and uniting them with *Shekhinah*.

165. ושבתי **(*Ve-shavti*), *I will return, in peace… I will sit on peace*, precisely!** Rabbi Yehudah plays with the

related roots שוב (*shuv*), "to return," and ישב (*yshv*), "to sit." See Psalms 23:6.

When Jacob marries and engenders children, he will attain the rung of *Tif'eret*, closely linked with *Yesod*, who is known as "peace." Then he will be able to enhance and fulfill *Shekhinah, my father's house*.

Yesod, the divine phallus, brings peace by uniting *Tif'eret* with *Shekhinah*. See BT *Shabbat* 152a, where Rabbi Shim'on son of Ḥalafta refers to the phallus as "peacemaker of the home."

Shekhinah is known as *house* and derives from *Gevurah*, symbolized by Isaac, Jacob's father.

166. **there is the Holy Land** Jacob envisions returning to Beer-sheba.

167. והיה יהוה לי **(*ve-hayah YHVH li*), *and YHVH will be mine*...** By ending the citation of the verse here, Rabbi Yehudah has Jacob charting his spiritual journey from *Shekhinah* to *Tif'eret*, known as *YHVH*. See Naḥmanides, ad loc.

168. **where I will perform His rite** Uniting Him with *Shekhinah*.

169. **its end is inconsistent with its beginning...** The verse begins in the first person (*overwhelm me*) and concludes in the plural (*our transgressions*).

170. **site where the Book of Sinners lies open** In the realm of *Gevurah*, or *Din* ("Judgment"). See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: "Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah: one for the completely wicked, one for the completely righteous, and one for the intermediate."

171. **above David's head** Above the realm of *Shekhinah*, or *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"), symbolized by King David.

172. ***words of iniquity overwhelm me*** The sins recorded in the realm of *Gevurah* inflame the harsh quality of Judgment, which now dominates *Shekhinah*.

173. **Rather, he didn't believe in himself, lest he sin...** See *Mekhilta, Amaleq* (*Beshallaḥ*) 2: "He [God] gave

Jacob a hint, but he did not perceive it, as is said: *Here, I am with you; I will protect you* (Genesis 28:15). In the end he was very afraid, as is said: *Jacob was very frightened and distressed* (ibid. 32:8). A person assured by the blessed Holy One was so afraid? It is simply because Jacob our father said, 'Woe is me! Perhaps sin will be the cause [of God's withdrawing His promised protection].'"

See BT *Berakhot* 4a; Naḥmanides on Genesis 28:20.

174. **I will face even Compassion as Judgment...** I will not rely on God's Compassion, symbolized by the name *YHVH*, but will serve Him in total awe, constantly aware of His Judgment, symbolized by the name *Elohim*.

On the contrasting qualities of these two divine names, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 26; *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15; 33:3.

175. **Now I don't need Judgment** On my journey, I need God's quality of Compassion.

176. **I will merge with Judgment, bonding with it** Returning to the house of Isaac, symbolizing *Din* ("Judgment"), I will merge my quality, *Tif'eret*, known as *Raḥamim* ("Compassion"), with *Din*.

177. **I need Judgment to protect me** I need the protective power of *Din*, or *Gevurah* ("Power").

178. **this *stone* blessed from right and left...** The *stone* symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is blessed by both sides of the *sefirot* above Her, as well as by human righteous action below.

See *Zohar* 1:72a–b, 146b, 231a; 2:229b–230a.

The "tithe" refers to the conclusion of Jacob's promise in this verse: *and everything that You give me I will surely tithe to You*. This tithe also symbolizes *Shekhinah*, tenth of the *sefirot*, whose blessing is ensured by Jacob's offering.

179. **supernal stone** *Shekhinah*.

180. **many stones serving as the foundation upon which it rests** Angelic powers beneath *Shekhinah*. See above, page 323.

181. **yet it is written: *This stone that I set up as a pillar*!** Implying that *this stone* stands below, not above.

182. **Here he raised Her as a supernal pillar… all the glory of *this*…** Jacob raised *Shekhinah* toward Her partner, *Tif'eret*, linking Her with Him by means of *Yesod*, the divine phallus, who is known as *this* (see above, page 338). The world below is sustained only through the union of the masculine divinity with *Shekhinah*, *the house of Elohim*.

183. ***Will be a house of Elohim*, forever** The Temple will be built and rebuilt here.

184. **The verse should read: *a house of YHVH*…** The usual designation of the Temple, as indicated in the verse from Psalms. The preceding citation, *to establish the house of YHVH*, does not appear in the Bible. See Ezra 1:5; 2 Chronicles 31:11.

Sefirotically, since *Shekhinah* welcomes, or houses, *Tif'eret*, She should be called *house of YHVH*, not *house of Elohim*.

185. **site of the house of Judgment…** *Shekhinah* is characterized by *Din* ("Judgment"). First, She is the daughter of *Binah*, who is the source of Judgment and known as both Jubilee and *Elohim*, or "Living *Elohim*." Second, She derives from *Gevurah*, or *Din*, symbolized by Isaac.

On *Binah* as Jubilee, see above, note 19.

186. **Even though judgments arouse from Jubilee…** Although *Binah* generates *Din*, and in fact, all of the seven lower *sefirot*, which express both compassion and judgment.

187. **all freedom issues from Her** Symbolized by Jubilee, She is the source of redemption and liberation, specifically the Exodus from Egypt. See above, note 19.

188. **Rather, *house of Elohim*—aspect of severe Judgment** The title *house of Elohim* describes *Shekhinah*, who houses *Din* ("Judgment"), known as *Elohim*.

189. **If for good, from the side of the left love arouses…** The passion of the left side stimulates the union of the masculine divinity with *Shekhinah*.

190. **If for evil, from the side of the left severe Judgment arouses…** Then the harsh aspect of *Din* (symbolized by north) dominates, generating evil. See *Bahir* 109 (162).

191. **Certainly the supernal world is a *great king*…** *Binah*, the supernal world, is a *great king*, while *Shekhinah* is the royal city and *house of Elohim*, house of *Binah*. See *Zohar* 1:206b.

The lower king is either *Tif'eret* or *Shekhinah*, known as *Malkhut* ("Kingdom").

192. **field of Ono** A fertile region near Lydda. See BT *Ketubbot* 111b; *Zohar* 2:10b, 103b; 3:144b (*IR*), 217b; *ZḤ* 81b (*MhN, Rut*), 84b (*MhN, Rut*).

193. **saw Elijah** According to the Bible (2 Kings 11:12), the prophet Elijah did not die a normal death but was carried off to heaven in a chariot of fire. He became associated with the Messianic age (Malachi 3:23–24) and in rabbinic tradition is described as "still existing" (BT *Bava Batra* 121b) and revealing divine secrets to righteous humans (BT *Bava Metsi'a* 59b).

In Kabbalah mystical experiences are known as revelations of Elijah. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 19–21; *Zohar* 1:1b; 3:221a, 231a, 241b; *ZḤ* 59d, 62c (*ShS*), 63d (*ShS*), 70d (*ShS*), 73c (*ShS*).

194. **He said to him** Rabbi Ḥiyya said to Elijah.

195. **luster** קסטוטירא (*Qastutira*), apparently derived from the Aramaic קסיטרא (*qasitra*) and the Greek *kassiteros*, "tin." See *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), Numbers 31:22; *Zohar* 1:125a, 168a; 2:24b; *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 188.

196. **He said** Elijah said.

197. **Jerusalem is about to be destroyed** The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple in 70 C.E. Various commentators try to explain how Elijah could predict the destruction to these two companions of Rabbi Shim'on in the second century C.E.—after the fact! The

explanations are rather contrived. Apparently the thirteenth-century author(s) either didn't care about the chronology or intentionally inserted an anachronism to confuse or shock the reader. See above, note 65.

198. **Jerusalem is judgment…** Jerusalem symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who derives from *Din* ("Judgment, Justice"). See Lamentations 1:21: צדק (*Tsedeq*), *Justice, lodges there*. The continued existence of Jerusalem and the fulfillment of *Shekhinah* depend upon justice; when this is lacking, *Shekhinah* weakens and Jerusalem becomes vulnerable to harsh judgment.

See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 30b: "Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'Jerusalem was destroyed only because they rendered judgment there strictly in accordance with the law of Torah [rather than going beyond the requirements of the law].'"

199. **Samael has already been empowered over her…** Over Jerusalem and the mighty scholars of Torah. The phrasing here apparently derives from a passage in Heikhalot literature describing the martyrdom of ten famous rabbis during the reign of the Roman Emperor Hadrian in approximately 135 C.E. See Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §108.

200. **Torah is the Tree of Life…** Torah is identified with the Tree of Life, based on the description of wisdom in Proverbs 3:18: *She is a tree of life to those who grasp her*. See BT *Berakhot* 32b, 61b.

Here Torah symbolizes *Tif'eret*, known as the Tree of Life, who stands above Jerusalem, symbolizing *Shekhinah*.

201. **As long as Torah is aroused below** By human study.

202. **Tree of Life withdraws from her** From Jerusalem and from *Shekhinah*, interrupting the divine union.

203. ***The voice is the voice of Jacob…*** The verse continues: *and the hands are the hands of Esau*. According to a midrashic reading, as long as *the voice of Jacob* is engaged in prayer and study, *the hands of Esau* are

powerless against him, but when *the voice of Jacob* falls silent or complains against God, *the hands of Esau* dominate him. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:20; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 15:5; *Zohar* 1:171a.

Here *the voice* symbolizes *Tif'eret*, known as both *voice of Jacob* and Torah. "Speech" symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who conveys the divine word. She is empowered by human study of Torah, which stimulates *Tif'eret* to unite with Her. Esau symbolizes Rome, led by Samael.

204. ***Unless YHVH watches over the city*—those engaged in Torah** Those who study Torah, which symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who is also known as *YHVH*.

205. **the Holy City** Jerusalem.

206. **not by the mightiest men in the world** See *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 2: "Rabbi [Yehudah Nesi'ah II] sent Rabbi Assi and Rabbi Ammi on a mission to improve the cities of the land of Israel. They entered a city and said to the residents, 'Bring us the guardians of the city.' They brought them the commander of the watch and the guardsman. They [the rabbis] exclaimed, 'Are these the guardians of the city? These are the destroyers of the city!' They asked, 'Who, then, are the guardians of the city?' They replied, 'The teachers of Bible and Mishnah, who meditate upon, teach, and preserve Torah day and night, in accord with what is said: *Meditate on it day and night* (Joshua 1:8), and similarly: *Unless YHVH builds the house*, [*its builders labor in vain. Unless YHVH watches over the city, the watchman guards in vain*] (Psalms 127:1).'"

207. ***He looked, and here: a well in the field…*** The entire verse reads: *He looked, and here: a well in the field, and there were three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for from that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the mouth of the well was large*.

208. **he should have wailed a lamentation…** See BT *Berakhot* 7b: "*A psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom. A psalm of David?* The verse should read: *A*

lamentation of David! Rabbi Shim'on son of Avishalom said, 'To what can this be compared? To a person in debt. Until he pays it off, he is distressed; once he pays it, he rejoices. So it was with David. When the blessed Holy One said to him, *I am about to raise up evil against you from your own house* (2 Samuel 12:11), he was distressed, thinking: "Perhaps it will be a slave or a bastard who has no pity on me." Once he saw that it was Absalom, he rejoiced, and therefore he said, *A psalm*.'"

209. **he thought that the blessed Holy One had deferred his sin…** David thought that God had deferred punishment for his cardinal sin (with Bathsheba) until the world to come. Seeing Bathsheba bathing, David was attracted to her and slept with her. He then arranged for her husband, Uriah the Hittite, to die in battle, after which he married her. See 2 Samuel 11–12.

210. **as soon as he saw that He wanted to collect His due from him here…** See *Midrash Tehillim* 3:1: "The righteous rejoice when He executes judgment upon them, for He cleanses them of their sins. Know that this is so, for when the Attribute of Judgment struck David, he began to rejoice and sing: *A psalm of David*."

211. **Jacob fled… Moses fled…** See *Midrash Tehillim* 3:3.

212. **when David fled…** On David's flight from Absalom, see 2 Samuel 15–17; *Midrash Tehillim* 3:3.

213. **They all encountered this well** Both Jacob and Moses encountered a well, symbolizing *Shekhinah*. See the conclusion of the verse cited (Exodus 2:15): *He settled in the land of Midian, and he sat upon the well*. Similarly, Abraham and Isaac are linked with Beer-sheba ("Well of Seven").

214. **Because at that time it was hostile toward David…** David's sin with Bathsheba, who symbolizes *Shekhinah*, had alienated him from the divine feminine, so She

along with Her symbol (the well) were hostile toward him. See *Zohar* 1:93b–94a.

215. **water rose… like a woman delighting with her husband** *Shekhinah* was eager to unite with Jacob and Moses, both of whom symbolize *Tif'eret* and are described in the *Zohar* as Her "husband" or "master of the house." See above, note 42; *Zohar* 1:138b.

On the female waters, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:13: "Rabbi Shim'on son of El'azar said, 'Every single handbreadth [of water] descending from above is met by two handbreadths emitted by the earth. What is the reason? *Deep calls to deep…* (Psalms 42:8).' Rabbi Levi said, 'The upper waters are male; the lower, female. The former cry to the latter, "Receive us! You are creatures of the blessed Holy One and we are His messengers." They immediately receive them, as is written: *Let the earth open* (Isaiah 45:8)—like a female opening to a male.'"

See *Tosefta, Ta'anit* 1:4; 1 Enoch 54:8; *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 10 (*Battei Midrashot*, 1:25); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 23; *Zohar* 1:17b, 29b, 35a, 46a, 60b, 85b, 244a–b, 245b; 3:223b. According to the second-century Greek physician Galen, sperm is generated by both male and female. See Leviticus 12:2; Ibn Ezra, Naḥmanides, Baḥya ben Asher, and Sforno, ad loc.; BT *Berakhot* 60a; *Niddah* 31a. The ascent of "female waters" is emphasized by Isaac Luria.

216. **Elijah fled and didn't encounter it** On Elijah's flight, see 1 Kings 19. *Pesiqta Rabbati* 4 (citing 1 Kings 19:3) notes that Elijah also encountered a well, namely, Beer-sheba ("Well of Seven").

217. **Elijah was below the well… he is an angel…** Elijah is an angel dwelling beneath *Shekhinah*, unlike Moses and Jacob, who attained the rung of *Tif'eret*, above Her.

See above, note 193. Various sources allude to Elijah's heavenly or angelic status. See *Midrash Tehillim* 8:7: "*The bird of heaven* (Psalms 8:9)—this is Elijah, who flies through

the world as a bird." In *Targum Qohelet* 10:20 and *Ma'yan Ḥokhmah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:60), Elijah is identified as "Master of Wings." See BT *Berakhot* 4b; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29, and David Luria, ad loc., nn. 66–67; *Zohar* 1:46b, 209a, 245b; 2:197a; 3:88b; *ZḤ* 84c–d (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 60–63, 68–71; Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 24:14.

218. **he saw this well above, one corresponding to the other** As Jacob encountered the well, he saw the divine well, *Shekhinah*.

219. ***All the flocks were gathered there*** The full verse reads: *When all the flocks were gathered there, they would roll the stone off the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and then they would put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well*. The wording *all the flocks* implies more than just these three.

220. **these three are south, east, and north…** Symbolizing the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*. The polar opposites *Ḥesed* (the warm south) and *Gevurah* (the cold north) are balanced by *Tif'eret* (east). See *Zohar* 1:151b (*ST*).

221. **These stand beside this well, embracing it, filling it** The three principal flocks unite with *Shekhinah*, conveying to Her the flow of emanation.

222. ***the flocks were watered…watering all beasts…*** The numerous flocks symbolize the camps of angels, *beasts of the field*, nourished by *Shekhinah*, who is pictured as a field. See *Zohar* 1:151b–152a (*ST*), 161b.

223. ***All the flocks…All the streams flow into the sea*** According to this interpretation, the flocks symbolize all the *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*, which pour into the sea of *Shekhinah*.

224. ***They would roll the stone off the mouth of the well*** The verse continues: *and water the sheep*.

225. **removing from Her the rigor of severe Judgment…** The severe aspect of Judgment freezes the

water in the well of *Shekhinah*, which can only be thawed by an abundant flow of emanation. See *Zohar* 1:152a (*ST*).

226. **south is invigorated, and north cannot congeal the water** The warm waters of *Ḥesed* gush into *Shekhinah*, and *Din* ("Judgment") can no longer freeze them.

See *Zohar* 1:29b, 161b; 2:30a; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 341.

227. **the world needs Her judgment…** The power of *Din* has a positive aspect, since by executing judgment *Shekhinah* punishes wrongdoing.

228. **When he sat by the well** When Jacob sat by the well.

229. ***While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came…*** The two verses read: *While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. When Jacob saw Rachel, daughter of his uncle Laban, and the sheep of his uncle Laban, he went over and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well and watered the sheep of his uncle Laban*.

230. ***Moses rose up and saved them*** The verse continues: *and watered their sheep*.

231. **there Zipporah appeared** See Exodus 2:16–21.

232. **That well brought this about for them** They discovered their wives at the well through the agency of the divine feminine, *Shekhinah*.

233. **alluding to Seven…באר שבע (*Be'er Sheva*), Well of Seven** *Shekhinah* is called Seven and Well of Seven because She receives the flow of emanation from seven *sefirot* (*Binah* through *Yesod*, or *Ḥesed* through *Shekhinah* Herself). See above, page 321.

234. **inscribed only once** The well is mentioned only once.

235. **Moses separated himself completely from the house below** According to rabbinic tradition, after encountering God on Mount Sinai, Moses abstained from

sexual contact with his wife and maintained union with *Shekhinah*.

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 99; BT *Shabbat* 87a; *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 13; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 7:6; *Zohar* 1:22a, 234b; 2:222a; 3:148a, 180a.

236. **Jacob did not separate at all** Jacob maintained sexual relations with his two wives, Leah and Rachel, and with their maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah.

237. ***One is my dove, my perfect one, only one of her mother*** Alluding to *Shekhinah*, only daughter of *Binah*.

238. **Moses was master of the house, ascending on high** Moses served as husband of *Shekhinah*. See above, note 42.

239. **Of Moses is written… Of Jacob is written…** Moses was more deeply intimate with *Shekhinah* than was Jacob.

See *Zohar* 1:21b–22a, 236b; 3:187b; Liebes, "Myth vs. Symbol," 213–19.

240. **whoever engages in Torah gains total freedom—freedom from death…** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:3: "חרות (*Ḥarut*), *Engraved, upon the tablets* (Exodus 32:16). Do not read *ḥarut*, engraved, but rather חירות (*ḥeirut*), freedom. Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Neḥemiah, and the Rabbis: Rabbi Yehudah said, 'Freedom from the Angel of Death.' Rabbi Neḥemiah said, 'Freedom from kingdoms.' The Rabbis said, 'Freedom from suffering.'"

See BT *Eruvin* 54a; *Zohar* 1:131b; 2:45b. On the notion that the Angel of Death is powerless against one engaged in Torah, see BT *Shabbat* 30b; *Bava Metsi'a* 86a; *Makkot* 10a.

241. **Tree of Life** Torah is identified with the Tree of Life, based on the description of wisdom in Proverbs 3:18: *She is a tree of life to those who grasp her*. See BT *Berakhot* 32b, 61b.

In Kabbalah both Torah and Tree of Life symbolize *Tif'eret*.

242. **Tree of Death** According to *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 5, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is called the Tree of Death because when Adam and Eve ate its fruit, death ensued (see Genesis 2:17).

Here the term designates the demonic, though it often appears in the *Zohar* as a name of *Shekhinah* because of Her association with judgment and because if She is separated from the other *sefirot*, the vivifying flow of emanation is cut off and replaced by a deadly potion. See *Zohar* 1:35b, 51b–52a. On the relation between *Shekhinah* and the demonic, see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 189–92; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:376–79.

243. ***If you slacken*—losing your grip on Torah...** See BT *Berakhot* 63a: "Rabbi Tavi said in the name of Rabbi Yoshiyah, 'Whoever relinquishes words of Torah has no strength to stand in a day of adversity, as is said: *If you slacken, in the day of adversity how narrow is your strength!*'"

244. ***strength of koh is narrow*** כה (*Koh*), "Here, thus," designates *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, which is always right here.

245. **then *the strength of koh is narrow* ... painfully constricted** By abandoning Torah, one endangers both himself and *Shekhinah*. צר (*Tsar*) *means both "narrow" and "distress."*

See BT *Ḥagigah* 16a: "Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'Whoever sins secretly, it is as if he squeezes [or: thrusts away] the feet of *Shekhinah*.'" See *Zohar* 1:174b.

246. **loved above, loved below** See BT *Berakhot* 17a; *Qiddushin* 71a; *Bahir* 80 (111); *Zohar* 1:45b (*Heikh*), 159a, 242b; 2:46a, 228a.

247. ***YHVH loved him*** Referring to Solomon.

248. ***strength of koh is tsar*, his 'adversary,' hostile toward him** *Shekhinah* turns into his adversary. See above, note 214. On the link between the demonic and *Shekhinah*, see above, note 242.

249. **that one called Evil dominates him** The demonic dominates him through the evil impulse. See BT *Bava Batra* 16a: “Resh Lakish said, ‘Satan, the evil impulse, and the Angel of Death are one and the same.’”

250. **prevails over the body** See *Zohar* 2:213b, 269a; 3:172b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:764–65.

251. **does not prevail before obtaining authorization** See the description of Satan’s itinerary in BT *Bava Batra* 16a: “He descends and seduces, ascends and arouses wrath, obtains authorization, and seizes the soul.” According to Rabbi Abba, however, the demonic has no power over the soul, which departs on its own. See *Zohar* 1:148a–b (*ST*).

252. **We have learned that they control all events of the world…** See *Zohar* 2:262b–269a (*Heikh*).

253. **End of the Left…an end on the right and an end on the left** The demonic derives from *Gevurah* on the left side, while *Shekhinah* is the culmination of the flow of emanation, characterized by *Ḥesed* on the right.

See *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:6; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 17:5; *Zohar* 1:54a, 62b, 63a, 75a (*ST*), 210b; 2:34a, 134a–b, 181b.

254. **End of all flesh—called End of all flesh, not End of all spirit** The demonic manifests as the Angel of Death, destroying all flesh, but he cannot harm the spirit, which is subject to *Shekhinah*. The phrase “End of all flesh” derives from the announcement of the Flood in Genesis 6:13: *God said to Noah, “End of all flesh has come before Me*.” See *Zohar* 1:54a, 58a, 62b.

255. **mystery of world of male and world of female** The divine couple. See above, page 322.

256. **bountiful dew** Based on Psalms 68:10: *bountiful rain*.

257. **this side, mystery of the south** The right side of the lower *sefirot*, extending from *Ḥesed*, identified with the south, to *Shekhinah*, “End of the Right.”

258. **side of the north** Symbolizing *Gevurah*, divine source of the demonic. See Jeremiah 1:14; *Bahir* 109 (162).

259. **scoria** קסטופא (*Qastupha*), "Dross, slag, scoria," a neologism apparently based on the Aramaic כוספא (*kuspa*), "pomace, husk, residue." Gold symbolizes *Gevurah*, while the dross symbolizes the forces of evil left over after the refining process of emanation.

See *Zohar* 3:50b; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 348. Cf. the synonymous neologism סוספיתא (*suspita*) in *Zohar* 1:30a, 71b, 118b, 228a; 2:24b, 203a, 224b, 236b; Moses de León, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 384; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 389, n. 54. On gold and the north, see Job 37:22.

260. **linked to this above, linked below** Impurity is linked to its source in *Gevurah* above, and to the demonic depths below. For other interpretations, see Galante, Mopsik, *MmD*.

261. **rider, serpent, mystery of male and female** The demonic couple of Samael and Lilith, pictured as a rider on his serpent.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13: "Samael… took his band and descended and saw all the creatures created by the blessed Holy One. He determined that the most cunningly evil was the serpent, as is said: *Now the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had made*. He [the serpent] looked like a camel, and he [Samael] mounted and rode him."

See *Zohar* 1:35b, 64a, 137b, 146a, 148a (*ST*).

262. **This mystery is Azazel** This wilderness demon appears in Leviticus 16, where he is offered a scapegoat bearing the sins of Israel on Yom Kippur. In *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46, he is identified with Satan.

See Naḥmanides on Leviticus 16:8; *Zohar* 1:11a, 64a, 65a, 113b–114b, 138b, 139b, 142b, 145b, 174b, 190a, 210b; 2:154b, 237b, 266b; 3:63a (*Piq*), 102a, 202b–203a, 258b; *ZḤ* 87b–c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 49; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:890–95.

263. **Esau… red as a rose, hairy as a goat** In Genesis 25:25, Esau is described as *ruddy, like a hairy mantle all over*, and in 27:11 as איש שעיר (*ish sa'ir*), *a hairy man*. The word שעיר (*sa'ir*) also means "goat, demon, satyr." Further, Esau and his descendants inhabited שעיר (*se'ir*), *Seir* (see Genesis 32:4; 36:8–9).

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:15; *Zohar* 1:65a, 138b, 145b; 3:64a.

264. **root of empowered, shield-bearing chieftains ruling the world…** Esau is prince of demons. See *Zohar* 1:177a.

265. **the blessed Holy One is *justice* *Tif'eret*,** the blessed Holy One, is symbolized by *justice*.

266. **to another way** Following the demonic.

267. **all His ways *justice*** See Deuteronomy 32:4.

268. **Now, can a person *perform* *tsedaqah*, *charity*, *all the time*?** The Hebrew word צדקה (*tsedaqah*) means both "righteousness" and "charity." This question derives from BT *Ketubbot* 50a.

269. **site of Jacob, supernal chariot** Jacob (symbolizing *Tif'eret*) together with Abraham and Isaac (who symbolize *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*) constitute a throne or chariot for the higher *sefirot*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 47:6: "Resh Lakish said, 'The patriarchs themselves constitute the [divine] Chariot.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:3; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 57; *Zohar* 1:60b, 99a, 150a, 154b, 173b, 248b; 2:144a; 3:38a, 99a.

270. **spring of all springs** The highest and deepest sefirotic realm.

271. **all of them are called את (*et*), *time*** All of these forces beneath *Shekhinah* share Her name: את (*et*), *time*. *Shekhinah* is given this name because She is constantly changing, influenced by various forces at various times. See *Zohar* 1:116b, 194a, 198a; 2:155b.

272. **When Israel left the Holy Land, they came under alien authority** See *Sifra, Behar* 5:4, 109c: "Every Israelite who dwells in the land of Israel accepts upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and everyone who leaves the land is like an idol worshiper."

See *Tosefta, Avodah Zarah* 4:5; BT *Ketubbot* 110b; *Zohar* 1:95b, 177a; 3:266b.

See BT *Ta'anit* 10a: "The land of Israel is watered by the blessed Holy One Himself, while the rest of the world is watered by a messenger."

273. **blessings were withheld from the world** See M *Sotah* 9:12: "Rabban Shi'mon son of Gamliel says in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a, 'Ever since the day the Temple was destroyed, there is no day without a curse, dew has not descended for blessing, and flavor has departed from fruit.'" See *Zohar* 1:55b, 70b, 134a; 3:74b.

274. **as soon as he left the land...** See above, page 321.

275. **As soon as he sat by the well, water rose toward him...** See above, pages 346–48.

276. ***Jacob...went to Haran...and went to the land of the Easterners*** According to the plain meaning of the text, *Haran* and *the land of the Easterners* are one and the same, and Genesis 28:10 should be rendered: *Jacob...set out for Haran*. See Rashi, Rashbam, and Bekhor Shor, ad loc. Here, though, Rabbi Abba reads the text hyperliterally: *Jacob ... went to Haran...and* [subsequently] *went to the land of the Easterners*.

277. ***He said to them, 'Do you know Laban son of Nahor?'...*** The verse continues: *They said, 'We know him.'*

278. **I desire to enter *Shekhinah*, for I desire to couple** By finding a wife, one attains intimacy with the divine feminine. See above, page 331.

279. **When Father married he sent a servant...** See Genesis 24, where Abraham sends a servant to find a wife for Isaac.

280. **Haran was right there, and this well was in the field** Haran and *the land of the Easterners* are synonymous; the well was in a field outside the city.

281. ***She ran and told her father*** Rachel ran and told her father, Laban, that she had met Jacob at the well.

282. **since she engendered all those tribes** Leah, Laban's older daughter and Jacob's first wife, gave birth to six sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

283. **the blessed Holy One did not want to couple Leah… openly…** Jacob discovered the identity of his first wife only the morning after the consummation of their wedding. The reason God brought this about was that Leah symbolizes *Binah*, who is concealed. See *Zohar* 1:152a (*ST*), 158b.

284. **in order to draw Jacob's heart to the beauty of Rachel…** Jacob's unfulfilled passion for Rachel compelled him to stay with Laban for many years, during which time Leah gave birth to many children.

285. **Those shepherds told him: *Here comes Rachel…*** The shepherds themselves spoke these words, not the biblical narrator. See Rashi and Ralbag, ad loc.

286. ***Jacob said to Laban, 'I will serve you seven years…'*** The verse reads: *He said, "I will serve you seven years…."*

287. **moon is seven years old** The moon symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is filled with the emanation of seven *sefirot* (*Binah* through *Yesod*, or *Ḥesed* through *Shekhinah* Herself).

288. **so that he would approach her fittingly** So Jacob would convey the entire stream of emanation to Rachel, who symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

289. **so that he would be Heaven, and she, Earth** So he would play the role of *Tif'eret*, known as Heaven, and she would play the role of *Shekhinah*, known as Earth.

290. ***They seemed to him like only…a few days*** The full verse reads: *Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and*

they seemed to him like only a few days because of his love for her.

291. **those supernal ones—*aḥadim*, united…** The seven *sefirot* above, known as cosmic *days*, united with one another. For *aḥadim* as "united," see Ezekiel 37:17.

292. **corresponding to the supernal pattern** As above, *Tif'eret* unites with *Shekhinah*, conveying to Her the sevenfold emanation.

293. ***Tov*, *Better, that I give her to you*** The verse continues: *rather than give her to another man*. The word *tov* designates *Yesod* (known as Righteous One), who channels the entire flow to *Shekhinah*, based on Isaiah 3:10: *Say of the righteous one that he is good*. Alternatively, *tov* designates *Ḥesed*, first to issue from *Binah*. See *Zohar* 2:127a.

294. **Sabbatical** According to the Bible, every seventh year is a Sabbatical (Hebrew, שמטה [*shemittah*], "release"), during which the land must lie fallow and at the end of which all debts are remitted (Leviticus 25:1–24; Deuteronomy 15:1–3). In Kabbalah the Sabbatical symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is seventh of the lower *sefirot* and is filled with the emanation of seven *sefirot*. See above, pages 322–23.

295. **Jubilee is universally concealed… Sabbatical is revealed** According to the biblical cycle, after seven Sabbaticals comes the Jubilee, proclaimed every fifty years, when slaves are released and land reverts to its original owner (Leviticus 25:8–55). In Kabbalah the Jubilee symbolizes *Binah*, who generally is characterized by the number fifty, based on BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, where Rav and Shemu'el teach: "Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world, all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6)." *Binah* is the source of redemption and liberation, specifically the Exodus from Egypt. See above, page 322.

Here Rabbi El'azar notes that Jubilee and Sabbatical respectively reflect the concealed nature of *Binah* and the revealed nature of *Shekhinah*.

296. **When Jacob had served the first seven years** Jacob served Laban seven years in order to marry Rachel, but Laban tricked him, substituting Leah for Rachel. Then Jacob married Rachel and served Laban for seven more years. See Genesis 29:15–30.

297. **The *world* above: Jubilee—there, beginning…** The divine voice reassures Jacob that he was meant to first marry Leah, symbolizing *Binah*, the hidden upper world of Jubilee, the Divine Mother whose womb holds the seven lower *sefirot*. Just as *Binah* and Her gestating progeny are concealed, the true significance of Jacob's first seven years of service was concealed from him: he thought he was serving Laban for Rachel, who symbolizes Sabbatical, whereas he was really serving for Leah, so that he could begin from Jubilee.

298. **he served revealed years of Sabbatical…** Jacob then served an additional seven years for Rachel, symbolizing the lower world, *Shekhinah*, known as Sabbatical, who contains seven *sefirot* in a more revealed mode. Jacob, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, spans both sefirotic worlds.

On the phrase *from world to world*, see *Zohar* 1:34a, 158b, 248b; 2:22a, 53b; 3:145b, 285b, 297b.

The act of marrying two sisters is explicitly forbidden in Leviticus 18:18. See BT *Pesaḥim* 119b; *Zohar* 1:76a, 168a. For its mystical justification, see *Zohar* 2:126b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 351–55; idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 40–41.

299. **Leah gave birth to six sons and one daughter, fittingly so…** Leah's six sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun) symbolize the six sons of *Binah* (from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*), who stand above *Shekhinah*, symbolized by Leah's daughter, Dinah.

The term “six directions” derives from *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:13, where it refers to: above, below, north, south, east, and west. Here it designates *Binah*’s six sons.

300. **Rachel gave birth to two righteous ones, fittingly so…** Rachel’s two sons (Joseph and Benjamin) symbolize *Yesod* (known as Righteous One) and the righteous human being. Both of these righteous ones are intimate partners of *Shekhinah*, who is known as Sabbatical and *land*. See *Zohar* 1:155a–b, 245b; 2:211b.

In rabbinic literature Joseph is granted the title Righteous in recognition of resisting the sexual advances of Potiphar’s wife. See Genesis 39; BT *Yoma* 35b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 93:7; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, nispaḥim*, 460. Cf. *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 5, and *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 38, which cite Amos 2:6.

According to Kabbalah, because of his sexual purity Joseph attained the level of *Yesod*, the divine phallus and site of the covenant. *Yesod* is known as Righteous One, based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse literally means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, but is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

Benjamin is the only other one of Jacob’s sons who is accorded the title Righteous. See BT *Yoma* 12a; *Bava Batra* 11a; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 3.

301. **From Righteous One above, She obtains supernal water** From *Yesod*, *Shekhinah* receives the flow of emanation.

302. **from righteous one below, female emits water toward male…** Righteous human action stimulates *Shekhinah*’s passion for Her partner, *Tif’eret*. On female waters, see above, note 215.

303. **Just as male above dwells between two females…** Just as *Tif’eret* dwells between *Binah* and *Shekhinah*,

so *Shekhinah* dwells between *Yesod* and the righteous human being. See *Zohar* 1:49b–50a, 66b.

304. **because he guarded the sign of the covenant** By withstanding the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife, he preserved the sign of circumcision and attained the rung of *Yesod*, the divine phallus. See above, note 300.

305. **he did not sin with this sign of the covenant** He committed no sexual sin.

306. **If so, why he is called Righteous?** If he did not undergo the trial of temptation, how did he deserve this title?

307. **the whole time Jacob was mourning over Joseph, he did not perform…** After Joseph disappeared and Jacob went into mourning, Benjamin abstained from sexual relations.

308. **just a child, unmarried; yet you say…** At that time, Benjamin was a young boy, so his lack of sexual activity is not remarkable.

309. **We have learned as follows: When Joseph asked Benjamin…** The midrash recorded in *Bereshit Rabbah* 94:8 reads differently: "*The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher* [*and Ashbel, Gera and Na'aman, Ehi and Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard*]. When Joseph stood with Benjamin he asked him, 'Do you have sons?' He replied, 'Yes.' He asked him, 'How many?' He replied, 'Ten.'…" The names of each of Benjamin's ten sons are then linked with Joseph's life and character.

See ibid. 93:7, in the name of Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥman: "He asked him, 'Do you have a wife?' He replied, 'I have a wife and ten sons.'…" Cf. BT *Sotah* 36b.

Here Rabbi El'azar offers a different version in support of his view that Benjamin had not consummated his marriage. The text is in disarray. I follow the reading of MSS R1 and M7; see *KP*. For various readings and interpretations, see the standard editions, variants, and *OY*, Galante, *MM, MmD, Zohorei Ya'bets*.

310. **Now, if you say, *'The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher…'*** The verse continues: *and Ashbel, Gera and Na'aman, Ehi and Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard*. If Benjamin spoke this verse as part of his reply to Joseph's question, his sons must have already been born.

311. **when they entered Egypt it was certainly so** Benjamin is described as having ten sons only later, when Jacob's entire clan came to Egypt. See Genesis 46:6–27.

312. **later he did, engendering children** Several commentators wrestle with the problem of how Benjamin could have sired ten sons in the short interval between his reunion with Joseph and the clan's arrival in Egypt.

313. **Joseph constituted the covenantal sign of my father…** Joseph symbolizes *Yesod*, the divine phallus, which is the site of the covenant of circumcision and consummation of the male sefirotic body. His father Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, the torso of the body. See above, page 333.

314. **Since he has vanished, I will guard my brother's site** Since Joseph has disappeared, I will guard the covenant, symbolizing *Yesod*, by refraining from sexual activity. See *Zohar* 1:155b.

315. **when he vanished he was not righteous…** When Joseph was kidnapped by his brothers and sold into slavery, he was not yet righteous since he had not yet withstood the attempted seduction by Potiphar's wife.

316. **they all knew from Jacob, since Jacob knew…** All the tribes had learned from Jacob that Joseph had inherited the rung of *Yesod*.

317. ***When Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said…*** The birth of Joseph, symbolizing *Yesod*, indicated the consummation of the divine body, so now Jacob, symbolizing the torso, could return to the Holy Land. See *Zohar* 1:150b, 158a.

318. **Once Joseph was discovered** Once his identity was revealed to his brothers. See Genesis 45.

319. **Jacob didn’t perceive them since they belonged to Jubilee** Jacob was not aware that for those seven years he was serving Laban for Leah, since Her realm, *Binah* (Jubilee), is concealed.

320. **while those belonging to Sabbatical were revealed** During the second set of seven years, Jacob was fully aware that he was serving Laban for Rachel, who symbolizes *Shekhinah* (Sabbatical).

321. **For Sabbatical, revealed, he served Jubilee, concealed** Though Jacob thought he was serving Laban for Rachel, symbolizing Sabbatical, he was really serving for Leah, symbolizing Jubilee.

322. ***seven years*, unidentified: *for Rachel* he served…** Although the verse obviously refers to the second set of seven years rather than the first, this is not specified. Rabbi El’azar takes advantage of this lack of specificity and concludes that the text here refers to the first seven years, symbolizing the *sefirot* hidden within *Binah*, so Jacob’s service spanned both realms: Rachel (his intended focus) and Leah (the actuality), Sabbatical and Jubilee, *Shekhinah* and *Binah*.

For other interpretations, see *OY, MmD*.

323. ***Seven years* appear, but where are *seven times*?** If the first set of years derives from Jubilee, why are those years not described as seven times seven?

324. **those seven days on which he celebrated his wedding with Leah…** See Genesis 29:22–28. The seven days turned the seven years into seven times seven.

325. **But with Rachel…he didn’t celebrate seven days…** Concerning her, no seven-day wedding feast is mentioned, just the seven additional years of service, since she symbolizes Sabbatical, not Jubilee. See Genesis 29:30.

326. **he should have served the years of Sabbatical first…** As he did with Leah.

327. **Of that site is written…** Of *Shekhinah*, known as *righteousness*.

328. **But as to the four sons of the maids…** Bilhah and Zilpah, the maids of Rachel and Leah, gave birth to Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. What role do these four sons play in the sefirotic realm? See *Zohar* 1:155a, 158a.

329. ***their hinder parts all inward*** From the description of the large bronze reservoir built by Solomon in the Temple, which rested on twelve bronze oxen, three facing outward in each direction, with their hindquarters toward the center.

330. **there are three joints in the right arm, but the one in the middle…** The shoulder, the wrist, and—sticking out in the middle—the elbow. See *Zohar* 1:241a; 2:244a–b.

331. **one in the right leg, one in the left leg** The knee, between the hip and ankle. The arms and legs symbolize *Ḥesed, Gevurah, Netsaḥ*, and *Hod*; the elbows and knees protrude.

332. **When all is aligned** When a person stands erect, with arms hanging straight down.

333. **Each differs from the other, so all is arrayed as one** The unique function of every limb and joint contributes to the unified organism, both human and divine.

334. ***aqeret ha-bayit…* (*iqqara de-veita*), essence of the house** The word עקרת (*aqeret*), *barren woman*, is reinterpreted as עיקר (*iqqar*), "essence."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 71:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 20:2; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayetse* 15; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:8; *Zohar* 1:29a–b, 50a, 149b, 157b, 158b.

335. **Sabbatical, essence of this world, by whom it is conducted** Rachel symbolizes *Shekhinah*, also known as Sabbatical. *Shekhinah* conducts the lower world. See above, pages 355–56.

336. ***As a joyous mother of children*—Jubilee…** Leah symbolizes *Binah*, the Divine Mother, also known as Jubilee. See above, pages 355–56.

337. **This verse is totality of all… *Hallelujah!*** The verse spans the higher and lower *sefirot*, from *Binah* to *Shekhinah*. Its concluding exclamation, הללו־יה (*Halelu-Yah*), *Hallelujah*, "Praise *Yah*," alludes both to *Shekhinah*, known as Praise, and to *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, symbolized by the divine name יה (*Yah*). See *Zohar* 1:178b, 232b.

338. **children of a hated woman are unvirtuous** According to Rabbi Levi (in BT *Nedarim* 20b), children of a hated wife turn out to be rebellious sinners.

339. **But truly…all its actions were concealed from Jacob** *Binah*, symbolized by Leah, is a concealed realm. Leah was not actually *hated* by Jacob, but rather offensively strange to him, as suggested by Jacob's startled reaction the morning after he slept with her (Genesis 29:25): *In the morning, here, she was Leah!* See above, page 354.

340. **Lower world is revealed, beginning of all, to climb its rungs** *Shekhinah* is the gateway to the divine world, the first rung of the sefirotic ladder. See *Zohar* 1:7b.

341. **As supernal Wisdom is beginning of all…** *Ḥokhmah* ("Wisdom") is the primordial point of emanation, while *Shekhinah* is lower Wisdom, beginning of the spiritual ascent.

342. **So we call it אתה (*Attah*), You…** The second-person pronoun indicates *Shekhinah*, who, being revealed, can be addressed directly. See *Zohar* 1:15b, 37a, 158b; 2:138b, 261a (*Heikh*).

343. **higher world, Jubilee, we call הוא (*Hu*), He…** The third-person pronoun indicates *Binah*, who, being concealed, can be referred to only indirectly. See *Zohar* 1:158b.

344. ***He lay with her in the night*, הוא (*Hu*), *He*** This description of Jacob's union with Leah is usually understood: *He lay with her that night*. However, the wording בלילה הוא (*ba-lailah hu*), *in that night*, is strange; one would expect בלילה ההוא (*ba-lailah ha-hu*). Rabbi El'azar reads the phrase hyperliterally: *in the night, Hu, He*. This pronoun

refers to *Binah*, who is symbolized by Leah and facilitated the union.

See BT *Niddah* 31a; Rashi and *Sekhel Tov* on Genesis 30:16; *Zohar* 1:157b (*ST*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 98; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, Genesis 30:16, n. 60. Cf. Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 42–46.

345. ***The Levite will serve Hu, He,* drawing from Him blessings for all** *The Levite*, symbolizing *Gevurah*, draws blessing from *Hu, He*, symbolizing *Binah*. See *Zohar* 2:221b; 3:171a, 178a–b.

346. ***He cleaves to his wife*** Jacob, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, cleaved to Rachel (symbolizing the Divine Wife, *Shekhinah*) rather than to Leah (symbolizing the Divine Mother, *Binah*). The full verse reads: *Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh*.

347. ***That Leah was hated*...a man hates incest with his mother...** Since Leah symbolized the Divine Mother, Jacob, who symbolized the Divine Son (*Tif'eret*), was loath to sleep with her after he discovered who she was.

According to M *Qiddushin* 4:12, a man is permitted to remain alone with his mother since there is no danger of sexual relations between them.

348. **The world exists only for the sake of Jacob** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:4: "Rabbi Berekhiah said, 'Heaven and earth were created only for the sake of Jacob.'" See above, page 324.

349. **For the sake of Abraham...** According to Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah (*Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9), the word בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*, is an anagram of באברהם (*be-Avraham*), "through Abraham," indicating that *heaven and earth* were created for his sake.

See *Zohar* 1:3b, 86b, 91b, 93a, 105b, 128b, 230b; 3:117a.

350. ***Thus says YHVH to the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham*** The verse is usually understood as: *Thus says YHVH, who redeemed Abraham, to the house of*

Jacob. However Rabbi El'azar reads it hyperliterally, based on the midrashic tradition that Jacob's merit *redeemed Abraham* from Nimrod's fiery furnace.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:2; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:4; BT *Sanhedrin* 19b; *Zohar* 3:57a.

351. **the blessed Holy One built worlds and destroyed them** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:2: "Rabbi Abbahu said, '… The blessed Holy One kept creating worlds and destroying them until He created these [i.e., heaven and earth]. Then He declared, "These please Me, those do not."'"

The theme of previous worlds that did not endure appears in the *Idrot* (*Zohar* 3:128a [*IR*], 292b [*IZ*]) and inspired Isaac Luria's theory of "the breaking of the vessels."

352. **upon him worlds were founded… *your Creator, Jacob*…** Normally, the verse is read: *Thus says YHVH, your Creator, O Jacob; your Former, O Israel!* Here, following midrashic tradition, Rabbi El'azar understands it to mean that Jacob himself functions as the Creator. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:4.

Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who balances the polar extremes: *Ḥesed* on the right and *Gevurah* on the left. This mediating quality ensures the stability of the world. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15.

353. **Israel is called 'son of the blessed Holy One'…** The people of Israel, descended from Jacob, who is called Israel, share in the designation "son" and cleave to *Tif'eret*, who is the blessed Holy One and the Divine Son. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:4.

354. **ראובן (*Re'uven*)… ראו בן (*Re'u ven*), *See, a son!*—nameless…** Drawing on the simplest etymology, Rabbi El'azar suggests that Leah did not actually name her son, but simply said: ראו בן (*Re'u ven*), *See, a son!* His individual identity merged with that of his soon-to-be-born brothers,

Simeon and Levi, the three of them together symbolizing the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 71:3, and Theodor, ad loc.; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 29:32; *Zohar* 1:155a (*ST*), 176b, 222b.

355. **Why לוי (*Levi*), Levi?...ולויות (*ve-loyot*), *with his companion*...** The verse from Kings describes the engravings of cherubs, lions, and palm trees on the laver stands built by Solomon for the Temple. These figures were engraved *according to the space between each one*, ולויות (*ve-loyot*), *with wreaths*. Here, drawing on Talmudic tradition, Rabbi El'azar derives *loyot* from the root לוה (*lvh*), "to be joined, accompany." See BT *Yoma* 54a–b; and Genesis 29:34, cited below.

Usually in the *Zohar*, Levi symbolizes *Gevurah* (see above, note 345). Here, however, he symbolizes *Tif'eret*, "juncture" of right and left—*Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*—symbolized respectively by Reuben and Simeon.

356. **From here...*surpassing*...according to its translation...** Rabbi Yehudah agrees that Reuben merged with Simeon and Levi, but he derives this from the blessing bestowed by Jacob on his firstborn: *Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength and first fruit of my vigor! Surpassing in dignity, surpassing in power!* The Aramaic rendering of this verse in *Targum Onqelos* concludes: "You are worthy of obtaining three portions: birthright, priesthood, and kingdom," which according to Rabbi Yehudah alludes to *Tif'eret* (the son, or firstborn), *Ḥesed* (symbolized by the priest), and *Gevurah* (source of *Malkhut*, "Kingdom").

357. **Leah thought so...** Leah thought that her first son was part of the triad, as indicated by her reference to "joining" when she named her third son, Levi.

358. **supernal chariot comprises the patriarchs...** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 47:6: "Resh Lakish said, 'The patriarchs themselves constitute the [divine] Chariot.'"

In Kabbalah the three patriarchs (Abraham on the right, Isaac on the left, and Jacob between them) symbolize the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, which serves as a chariot for the three highest *sefirot*. See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 57; *Zohar* 1:60b, 99a, 150a, 173b, 248b; 2:144a; 3:38a, 99a.

Here King David, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, completes the Chariot, serving as the fourth leg of the divine throne. See *Zohar* 1:5b, 20a, 82a, 89b (*ST*).

On the relation between David and the patriarchs, see Acts 2:29; *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1; BT *Berakhot* 16b; *Pesaḥim* 117b; *Sanhedrin* 107a; *Midrash Tehillim* 18:8, 25; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 45 (54); Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittaḥon*, 396; Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 32:10; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:265, n. 94. Cf. above, p. 23, n. 164.

359. **supernal chariot, mystery of the holy name** יהוה (*YHVH*). *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret* are symbolized respectively by the first three letters, while the final ה (*he*) designates *Shekhinah*.

360. **subsequently Judah, who inherited kingdom** While Leah's first three sons symbolize the triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, her fourth son, Judah—progenitor of the Davidic dynasty—symbolizes *Shekhinah*, or *Malkhut* ("Kingdom").

361. ***This time I will praise YHVH...*** The verse records Leah's reaction at the birth of her fourth son: *'This time* אודה (*odeh*), *I will praise, YHVH.' So she named him* יהודה (*Yehudah*), *Judah. Then she stopped giving birth*.

362. **as long as Assembly of Israel is in exile...** The name "Assembly of Israel" refers to both the people of Israel and their divine counterpart, *Shekhinah* (see above, note 15). *Shekhinah* follows Israel into exile, and without Her ה (*he*), the divine name יהוה (*YHVH*) is incomplete. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 3:16.

363. **Why *va-ta'amod, she stood*?** The literal meaning of the word. See *Zohar* 1:186a.

364. **until here She stands in unity…** The *sefirot* are a realm of unity; below Shekhinah begins the realm of multiplicity and division. See *Zohar* 1:241a.

365. **Similarly with those two sons she bore afterward** It would seem that Issachar and Zebulun, born later, inhabited the World of Division.

366. **six directions of the world are as one** The term "six directions" derives from *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:13, where it refers to: above, below, north, south, east, and west. Here it designates *Binah*'s six sons, the six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*, symbolized by Leah's six sons, including Issachar and Zebulun, who correspond specifically to *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*. See above, page 356.

367. **black light** *Shekhinah*, who has no light of Her own. See *Zohar* 1:50b–51b, 77b, 83b.

368. **restoring the essence of all to its site** Restoring *Shekhinah*, the essence of the world (see above, page 361), to Her site of union with *Tif'eret*.

369. **All those worlds assume the same pattern…** The twelve tribes below adorn *Shekhinah*, as their corresponding aspects above enthrone *Binah*.

370. **Sons of the maids are four, conjoined with these…** The sons of the maids are Dan, Naftali, Gad, and Asher. On their sefirotic role, see above, page 360.

371. **everything engendered by the lower world is division…** Once the stream of emanation flows from the highest *sefirot* through *Shekhinah* ("the lower world" or "garden"), it divides into the world of multiplicity, as indicated by the verse in Genesis: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four riverheads*.

372. **So what do you say about Joseph and Benjamin?…** These two were brought forth by Rachel, who

symbolizes *Shekhinah*, source of the World of Division. How can they share in the unity of Jacob's other ten sons?

373. **Rabbi Abba came and kissed him** For posing such a challenging question. See above, page 360.

374. **higher world is arrayed in twelve of its own** *Binah* is arrayed in twelve aspects corresponding to the twelve sons, all of whom pertain to Her.

375. **Righteous One perpetually emerges and enters…** There are two aspects of *Yesod*, known as Righteous One. From above, *Yesod*, the divine phallus, unites with *Shekhinah*, "the lower world," entering Her; yet this union of the divine couple is stimulated by the righteous human being on earth who emerges from *Shekhinah*. Both aspects of Righteous One focus continually on the site of *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:153b, 245b; 2:211b, 259a (*Heikh*).

376. ***As her soul departed—for she was dying…*** The verse describes Rachel giving birth to Benjamin: *As her soul departed—for she was dying—she named him Ben Oni; but his father called him Benjamin*.

377. **entering in the mystery of Joseph…** The two aspects of *Yesod* correspond to Joseph and Benjamin. See above, note 300.

378. **thinking she had given birth below in the World of Division…** Rachel thought that Benjamin belonged below and would play no role in the unified realm of Jacob's other sons.

379. **בן ימין (*Ben Yamin*), Son of the Right, for he ascended…** The right symbolizes the higher realm of unity. On Benjamin filling Joseph's place, see above, pages 357–59.

380. **The verse should read: *with all my* לב (*lev*), *heart*** Why the unusual form לבב (*levav*), with a double ב (*bet*)*?*

381. ***with all my levav*… two sides…** The double ב (*bet*) symbolizes the two impulses, associated with the right and

left sides of the *sefirot*, which are characterized by *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*. The totality of the *sefirot* expresses the divine name.

See M *Berakhot* 9:5: "*With all* לבבך (*levavekha*), *your heart* (Deuteronomy 6:5)—with both your impulses: your good impulse and your evil impulse."

See BT *Berakhot* 61a; *Zohar* 1:49b, 144b, 165b, 174b, 178b; 3:263b.

382. **other directions of this world** Symbolizing the other four *sefirot*, which complete the "six directions" of *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*. See above, note 366.

383. **south and north** Symbolizing *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*.

384. ועדה **(*ve-edah*), *and the assembly*—site of... Judah...** Judah, progenitor of the Davidic dynasty, symbolizes *Shekhinah*, or *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"), who is also known as *Keneset Yisra'el*, "Assembly of Israel." Here Rabbi Shim'on plays with the alliteration: ועדה (*ve-edah*), יהודה (*Yehudah*), ועדותי (*ve-edoti*), עוד (*od*). The verse from Psalm 132 refers to the Davidic line.

385. **Yet...*with all* לבי (*libbi*), *my heart; before Elohim*... a single site...** The spelling לבי (*libbi*), with a single ב (*bet*), indicates David's focus on the right side in chanting this verse. Since *Shekhinah*, who is known as *Elohim*, derives from the left, he sought to draw Her to the right.

386. **embracing south...east** Judah, symbolizing *Shekhinah* (in the west), joins with *Ḥesed* and *Tif'eret* (south and east).

387. **from the left side, originating from the north** From the side of *Gevurah*, symbolized by north.

388. **body** *Tif'eret*, torso of the divine body.

389. **So, *This time I will praise YHVH*** This is why Leah praised *YHVH* when Judah was born. See above, pages 364–65.

390. ותעמוד **(Va-ta'amod), *She stopped... She stood*...** Now the divine throne was stable and complete. See above, page 365.

391. **went out to the villages** For this phrase, see BT *Berakhot* 18b, *Pesaḥim* 3b, *Beitsah* 9b, *Yevamot* 105a, *Bava Batra* 98b.

392. **Innovations of Torah are required here!** Their presence together demands that they engage in Torah. See M *Avot* 3:6: "Rabbi Ḥalafta of the village of Ḥananya says, 'If ten are sitting engaged in Torah, *Shekhinah* dwells among them….even five…even three…even two…even one.'" Here Rabbi Shim'on calls for creativity.

393. **They sat for three days** See *Zohar* 1:240b; 3:205a.

394. **How far can a human see? Three parasangs, or four or five** The Greek parasang equals about 3.5 miles. See BT *Bekhorot* 54b: "The eye of a shepherd can exercise control for a distance of sixteen mils [about nine miles]." See Naḥmanides on Genesis 15:18.

395. **the blessed Holy One lifted the land of Israel…** Therefore God told Abraham: "*Raise your eyes now and look*…." According to rabbinic tradition, the land of Israel stands at the center of the world. See *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 10: "The land of Israel sits in the center of the world, Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel, the Temple in the center of Jerusalem, the nave in the center of the Temple, the ark in the center of the nave, and in front of the ark the Rock of Foundation, from which the world was founded."

396. **whoever sees Rabbi Shim'on sees the whole world…** On the mythic stature of Rabbi Shim'on, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 35:2; *Zohar* 3:79a; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 28–30.

397. ***The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your seed*** God's promise to Jacob while he lay asleep dreaming.

398. **it was no more than four cubits!** The length of ground occupied by Jacob as he slept was no more than four cubits (approximately six feet).

399. **within those four cubits the blessed Holy One rolled up…** See BT *Ḥullin* 91b: "*The land upon which you lie*. What is so great about that? [The actual area of land occupied by Jacob's body was miniscule.] Rabbi Yitsḥak said, 'This teaches that the blessed Holy One rolled up the whole land of Israel and placed it beneath our father Jacob, so that it would be easily conquered by his descendants.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:4; *Zohar* 1:72a; 3:84a.

400. **Rabbi Shim'on, Lamp of the whole world!** Enlightening the world. On the title "Lamp," see 2 Samuel 21:17; *Bereshit Rabbah* 85:4; BT *Ketubbot* 17a, where Rabbi Abbahu is called: "Lamp of Light"; and *Berakhot* 28b, where Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai is called "Lamp of Israel." On Rabbi Shim'on as "Lamp," see *Zohar* 1:3b–4a, 197b; 3:171a; *ZḤ* 85d (*MhN, Rut*).

401. ***This time I will praise YHVH*** Leah's exclamation upon giving birth to Judah. See above, pages 364–65, 367–68.

402. **Judah is the fourth son of the Throne, consummating the Throne** Leah's fourth son, Judah, progenitor of the Davidic dynasty, symbolizes *Shekhinah*, or *Malkhut* ("Kingdom"). Together with Reuben, Simeon, and Levi (who symbolize *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*), Judah embodies the divine throne.

403. **This verse has been established in numerous places** The verse is cited often in rabbinic and kabbalistic literature. See BT *Ḥullin* 127a; *Zohar* 1:134b; 3:42b–43a.

404. **camps** Of angels.

405. **all simultaneously** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 7.

406. **like a hammer scattering sparks within sparks…** See *Zohar* 3:292b (*IZ*).

407. ***By the word of YHVH*—Speech; *by the breath of His mouth*—Spirit** Speech symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who conveys the divine word. Spirit symbolizes *Tif'eret*, a more ethereal realm.

408. **One does not proceed without the other** As speech is impossible without breath, so *Shekhinah* manifests only through the power of *Tif'eret*.

409. **single concealed light, from which radiate all those revealed lights** *Binah*, from whom emanate all the lower *sefirot*.

410. **higher world** Extending from *Binah* through *Yesod*.

411. **fashioning an artisan, a light that does not shine...** *Shekhinah*, who has no light of Her own. She is the artisan who fashions the lower world. Alternatively, *Shekhinah* Herself is the lower world, emanating from *Binah*. The phrase here can also be rendered: "The artisan fashioned a light that does not shine," i.e., *Binah* fashioned *Shekhinah*.

On the connotations of "artisan," see *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1; *Zohar* 1:22a (*TZ*), 47b, 62a; 2:167b; 3:219b.

412. **by joining below, it joins illuminatingly the juncture above** By uniting below, *Shekhinah* is stimulated to unite above with Her partner, *Tif'eret*, who illumines Her.

413. **as is written:...*In wisdom*...** By means of *Shekhinah*, the artisan, known as Lower Wisdom.

414. **Everything on earth corresponds above** A general principle of Kabbalah. See *Zohar* 1:38a, 57b–58a, 129a, 145b, 158b, 205b; 2:15b (*MhN*), 20a (*MhN*), 48b, 82b, 144a, 251a (*Heikh*); 3:45b, 65b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:273.

415. **Even the tiniest thing in this world depends upon another...** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 10:6: "Rabbi Simon said, 'You cannot find a single blade of grass [below (per Oxford MS 147)] that does not have a constellation in the sky, striking it and telling it: "Grow!"'"

416. **when this one below is aroused...** A related principle of Kabbalah. See *Zohar* 1:35a, 77b, 82b, 86b, 88a, 164a, 235a, 244a; 2:31b, 265a; 3:40b, 92a, 110b.

417. ***Give me some of your son's mandrakes!*** Rachel asked Leah for these because of their supposed aphrodisiac power.

418. **Issachar... embracing Torah...** See 1 Chronicles 12:33; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 354; *Bereshit Rabbah* 72:5.

419. ***Is your taking my husband a small thing?...*** The dialogue between Leah and Rachel runs as follows: *She* [Leah] *said to her, "Is your taking my husband a small thing, that you would take my son's mandrakes too?" Rachel replied, "Then he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes*."

420. **הוא (*Hu*), *He—Hu*, precisely...the supernal world...** This description of Jacob's union with Leah is usually understood: *He lay with her that night*. However, the wording בלילה הוא (*ba-lailah hu*), *in that night*, is strange; one would expect בלילה ההוא (*ba-lailah ha-hu*). Rabbi Yitsḥak reads the phrase hyperliterally: *in the night, Hu, He*. This pronoun refers to *Binah*, who is symbolized by Leah and

facilitated the union that engendered Issachar. See above, note 344.

421. **Torah emerged from the supernal world** Torah, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, issued from *Binah*.

422. **Issachar was linked to it** To Torah. As Torah issued from *Binah*, so Issachar issued from Leah.

423. **Tree of Life** Torah is identified with the Tree of Life, based on the description of wisdom in Proverbs 3:18: *She is a tree of life to those who grasp her*. See BT *Berakhot* 32b, 61b. Here the name applies as well to *Tif'eret*, trunk of the sefirotic tree.

424. **אתה (*Attah*), You** The second-person pronoun indicates *Shekhinah*, who, being more revealed, can be addressed directly. See above, pages 361–62.

425. **children depend on the flux of destiny** See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 28a: "Rava said, 'Life, children, and sustenance do not depend on merit but on *mazzala*, destiny.'"

מזלא (*Mazzala*) means "constellation, planet, planetary influence, destiny, guardian angel." In the *Zohar* it is associated with the root נזל (*nzl*), "to flow," and often refers to the flow of emanation from the World of the Male, which comprises *Binah* through *Yesod*, the divine phallus. *Yesod* conveys this flow to *Shekhinah*, thereby engendering souls of the newborn.

See *Zohar* 1:43b (*Heikh*), 115a, 137a, 159b, 160b, 181a, 207b; 2:6a, 252b (*Heikh*); 3:25b, 77b, 289a (*IZ*), 292b (*IZ*), 295b (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 193; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 65 (82); Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 12a, 37a–b, 74a, 95a.

426. **in this matter** Conception.

427. ***for I have surely hired you*** The verse continues: *with my son's mandrakes*.

428. **This statement is impudent, so it seems, but not really so** Leah's boldness is praised in BT *Eruvin* 100b. See *Nedarim* 20b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 72:5; Moses de León,

She’elot u-Tshuvot, 40. Cf. JT *Sanhedrin* 2:5, 20d; *Bereshit Rabbah* 80:1.

429. **Holy Spirit roused within her** On the prophetic power of the matriarchs, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 67:9; 72:6; Naḥmanides on Genesis 30:9. The wording here recalls the description of Tamar in *Bereshit Rabbah* 85:9: “Holy Spirit נצנצה (*nitsnetsah*), sparkled, within her.”

430. **assigning them names in the mystery of wisdom** Through inspiration, Leah named her children according to their corresponding *sefirot*.

431. **let us engage in Torah, so the blessed Holy One will couple with us** On the importance of engaging in Torah while on a journey, see Deuteronomy 6:7; BT *Eruvin* 54a; *Ta’anit* 10b; *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 69b–70a, 76a, 87a, 115b. Cf. *Zohar* 1:49b–50a, 230a–b.

See M *Avot* 3:2: “Rabbi Ḥanina son of Teradyon says, ‘… If two are sitting engaged in Torah, *Shekhinah* dwells between them.’”

432. ***you shall eat unleavened bread*** The verse continues: *until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening*.

433. ***Seven days you shall eat it…*** The Passover sacrifice.

434. **The Companions have already been aroused by this word** The spelling is discussed in BT *Pesaḥim* 36a–b, 115b–116a. See *Zohar* 1:33a; 2:40a–b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 112,133.

435. **under alien authority** Under demonic power.

436. **Who is *impoverished*? King David…** Symbolizing *Shekhinah*, also known as *Malkhut* (“Kingdom”). She is *impoverished* because She has no light of Her own, just what is provided Her by the higher *sefirot*. See *Bahir* 19 (27).

437. **female without male is poor** *Shekhinah* is impoverished without the rich flow of emanation from Her partner, *Tif’eret*. See *Zohar* 2:40b.

438. **First they approached *matstsah*** *Shekhinah,* opening of the divine realm.

439. **other rungs** Higher *sefirot*.

440. **מצה (*matstsah*)...מצוה (*mitsvah*)... supplemented with ו (*vav*)** The letter ו (*vav*), whose numerical value is six, symbolizes *Tif'eret*, surrounded by the five other *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*. When this masculine ו (*vav*) was added to מצה (*matstsah*), symbolizing *Shekhinah*, She was transformed into מצוה (*mitsvah*). See Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 133; *Zohar* 3:251b (*RM*).

441. ***For* המצוה הזאת (*ha-mitsvah ha-zot*), *this commandment*** *Shekhinah,* the Divine Presence, is known as זאת (*zot*), *this*. Here this name is linked to the name מצוה (*mitsvah*), indicating Her state of fullfilment.

442. **Armed band of cutthroats** טופסרא דקטנון (*Tufsera de-qatnun*). The first of a pair of enigmatic phrases. In the *Zohar, tufsera* can mean "form, mold, configuration," based on טופסא (*tufsa*), derived from the Greek *tupos*, but here it seems to derive more naturally from the biblical term טפסר (*tifsar*), "marshal, commander, scribe." See Jeremiah 51:27, where *tifsar* is rendered by *Targum Yonatan* as "warriors" and understood by Rashi as "army."

See Nahum 3:17; *Zohar* 1:20b, 30b, 96b, 241b, 242b, 243b; 2:235b (*Tos*); 3:120a, 270b; *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178–80.

Qatnun may derive from the term קטנטין (*qetantin*) in *Midrash Tehillim* 54:2. There, according to Saul Lieberman (in *JQR* 35 [1944–45]: 35), it probably refers to a Roman officer, a *centenarius* ("commander of a hundred"), but the medieval dictionary *Arukh* defines the word as "murderer," based on the Greek *ktantes*.

443. **unroofed fortress** קוסטרא דקיטרא (*Qustera de-qitra*). *Qustera* derives from the Latin *castrum* (pl. *castra*), "fortified place, fortress, castle." See *Zohar* 1:29a, 30a, 62a (*Tos*), 85a, 128a, 148b.

The root *qtr* usually means “smoke” or “knot” in the *Zohar*, but here *qitra* may derive from the rare word קטרות (*qeturot*) in Ezekiel 46:22, as understood in M *Middot* 2:5: “unroofed.”

On one level, the voice is cryptically warning the two rabbis of an impending ambush. Yet “veer above” implies as well the imperative of spiritual ascent. The apparent security of this world is illusory: an unroofed fortress. For various interpretations of the message, see *OY*, Galante, *KP, Sullam*.

444. ***Arqa*** One of the seven levels of earth, corresponding to the seven heavens. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:11; *Sefer Yetsirah* 4:12; *Zohar* 1:9b, 39b–40a, 54b; 3:9b–10a; *ZḤ* 8c–9b 87b (*MhN, Rut*).

Cain was banished to *Arqa from the face of the earth* (Genesis 4:14) and generated demonic offspring. See El’azar of Worms, *Ḥokhmat ha-Nefesh*, 26c; *Zohar* 1:36b, 54a, 178a–b; 3:76b, 122a.

445. **Some of them look different, stranger than me** According to one tradition, descendants of Cain have two heads. See *Beit ha-Midrash*, 4:151–52; Judah ben Barzillai, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 173; *Tosafot, Menaḥot* 37a, s.v. *o qum gelei; Zohar* 1:9b; 2:80a; *ZḤ* 9b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:143, n. 34; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 125, n. 84.

446. **ארץ (*Erets*), Earth** Highest of the seven levels.

447. **ארץ החיים (*Erets ha-Ḥayyim*), Land of Life** *Shekhinah*, who is identified with *earth*. On Her name “Land of Life” (or “Land of the Living”), see *Zohar* 1:65b–66a, 95b, 115a, 124b, 143b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 62 (77).

448. **seven species** According to Deuteronomy 8:8, the land of Israel is blessed with seven species, but only two of these are grains. Rabbinic literature refers to five species of grain from which bread is normally produced and from which *matstsah* must be made. See M *Pesaḥim* 2:5; *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 8; BT *Berakhot* 35b; and Jehuda Feliks, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 6:1332–33. In fact, the version of

this *Zohar* passage translated in Al-Nakawa's *Menorat ha-Ma'or*, 2:233–34, mentions five and not seven species.

449. **The blessed Holy One gave Israel this bread from the Land of Life** God gave f them *matstsah*, symbolizing *Shekhinah*. See above, page 373.

450. **bread from heaven** As Rabbi Ḥiyya goes on to explain.

451. **he knows nothing until he tastes bread** See BT *Berakhot* 40a: "Rabbi Yehudah said, '… A baby does not know how to call out "Daddy!" or "Mommy!" until he has tasted grain.'" See *Bereshit Rabbah* 15:7.

452. **this *earth*** *Shekhinah*.

453. **realm befitting this *earth*** The realm of *Tif'eret*, fitting partner of *Shekhinah*.

454. **Heaven…*I am going to rain bread from heaven for you*** The manna from heaven provided for Israel in the desert symbolizes the flow of emanation from *Tif'eret*. See *Zohar* 1:246a; 2:40a, 61b, 183a; 3:95b, 292b (*IZ*).

455. **It was precisely for this that the blessed Holy One aroused us!** Meeting the man from *Arqa* stimulated them to explore the meaning of the verse from Job: *Earth, from which bread emerges*.

456. **two Damascene plums, one male and one female** Damascene plums are a variety native to Syria, mentioned in rabbinic literature. Although plum trees are not dioecious (distinguished as male or female), certain varieties require pollen from a different variety.

See *Tosefta, Bava Metsi'a* 7:4; JT *Shabbat* 1:7, 4a; BT *Berakhot* 39b; *Bava Qamma* 116a–b. On the significance of the dioecian palm tree, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 40:1; *Midrash Tehillim* 92:11; BT *Pesaḥim* 56a; *Bahir* 117 (172), 139 (198), and Scholem's note, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:82a; 2:37b, 126a; 3:16a, 135b (IR); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 128.

457. **Every single thing in the world corresponds to the pattern above…** See above, note 414. Here Rabbi Yose emphasizes that everything in the world imitates the male and female principle above. See BT *Bava Batra* 74b: "Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, 'Everything that the blessed Holy One created in His world, He created male and female.'"

458. **everything on earth has its counterpart in the sea** See BT *Ḥullin* 127a: "Everything existing on land exists in the sea, except for the weasel."

459. **How did she know?** That Jacob was coming.

460. **donkey brayed…** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 99:10: "*Issachar* חמור גָּרֶם (*ḥamor garem*), *a strong-boned donkey*—גָּרֶם חמור (*ḥamor garam*), a donkey caused, his birth. For how did Leah know that Jacob was coming? Only because the donkey brayed, and she heard its voice and went out to meet him."

See BT *Niddah* 31a; *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 49:14.

461. **Why *my son's mandrakes*?** Why did Leah specify this?

462. **So Jacob would be pleased, for these facilitate birth** And Rachel, who was barren, might conceive.

463. **Jacob knew that this matter depended not on mandrakes…** See above, pages 371–72.

464. **Holy Spirit said this** It was not Jacob who spoke this verse, but rather Holy Spirit.

465. ***aqeret ha-bayit*—lower world. *A joyous mother…* higher world…** The word עקרת (*aqeret*), *barren woman*, is reinterpreted as עיקר (*iqqar*), "essence." Rachel symbolizes *Shekhinah*, known as "lower world" and "essence" of the world. Leah symbolizes *Binah*, "higher world."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 71:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 20:2; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayetse* 15; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:8; *Zohar* 1:29a–b, 50a, 149b, 154a, 158b.

The conclusion of the verse, הַלְלוּ־יָהּ (*Halelu-Yah*), *Hallelujah*, "Praise *Yah*," alludes both to *Shekhinah*, known as Praise, and to *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, symbolized by the divine name יָהּ (*Yah*). See *Zohar* 1:154a, 178b, 232b.

466. **All these tribes are adornments below, all corresponding above** The twelve tribes below adorn *Shekhinah*, as their corresponding aspects above enthrone *Binah*. See above, page 365.

467. **to obtain a body from him. Who is that? Torah** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who is the torso of the sefirotic body and is symbolized by Written Torah. By uniting with Jacob, Leah engendered Issachar, famous for his Torah learning. See above, note 418.

468. **world that is coming and the inheritance of Jacob** "The world that is coming" alludes to *Binah*, who is constantly coming and flowing. "The inheritance of Jacob" alludes to *Tif'eret*.

469. **יִשָּׂשכָר, יֵשׁ שָׂכָר (*Yissachar, yesh sakhar*), *Issachar—there is reward*** Dividing the name into two words. See Genesis 30:18. The word יֵשׁ (*yesh*) indicates the rich flow of emanation from *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*. See *Zohar* 1:6a.

Several manuscripts cite instead Jeremiah 31:16: *For* יֵשׁ שָׂכָר (*yesh sakhar*), *there is a reward, for your labor*. See *Tanḥuma, Shemot 3; Sekhel Tov*, Genesis 30:18; *Zohar* 1:242b.

470. ***So I may endow those who love Me with* יֵשׁ (*yesh*), *substance…*** According to rabbinic tradition, this verse describes the abundant reward of the righteous in the afterlife.

See M *Avot* 5:19; *Uqtsin* 3:12; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, nispaḥim, Vezot Haberakhah*, 451; BT *Sanhedrin* 100a; *Zohar* 1:4b, 206a, 242b; 2:166b.

471. ***For I have borne him six sons!*** When Leah gave birth to Zebulun, she exclaimed: *God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will prize me, for I have borne him six sons!*

472. **above, below, and four directions of the world** Leah's six sons symbolize the six directions (up, down, and the four cardinal points), alluding to the six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, born to *Binah*. See above, note 366.

473. **Whoever prolongs אחד (*eḥad*), *one*...** The first line of the *Shema* contains six words in Hebrew: יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד שמע ישראל (*Shema Yisra'el YHVH Eloheinu YHVH eḥad*), *Hear O Israel! YHVH is our God, YHVH is one* (Deuteronomy 6:4). Traditionally, one who prays prolongs the pronuncation of the final word, אחד (*eḥad*), *one*.

See BT *Berakhot* 13b: "Rabbi Yirmeyah was sitting before Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Abba, who saw that he was prolonging very much. He said to him, 'Once you have enthroned Him above and below and in the four directions of heaven, you need do nothing more.'"

See *Zohar* 1:12a; 2:216b; *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 61:6; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:971–74.

474. ***upon mountains of separation*** על הרי בתר (*Al harei vater*). The word vater is interpreted variously and is probably derived from the root meaning "to cut, divide," thus denoting "cleft, jagged, craggy" mountains.

475. **Six sons of Leah, embracing six others...** Leah symbolizes the Divine Mother, *Binah*. Her six sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun) symbolize the six offspring of *Binah*, the *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*. This first sextet implies another: Jacob's other six sons, born to Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah (Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naftali, Gad, and Asher). See above, pages 365, 377; *Zohar* 1:241a.

476. ***Do not take the mother along with the young*** When taking fledglings or eggs from a nest.

477. **She is the concealed world—unrevealed; so *Let the mother go*...** The mother bird symbolizes the Divine Mother, *Binah*, who lies beyond comprehension and cannot be grasped. So let Her go, put Her out of your mind, do not even try to capture this subtle dimension of divinity.

Rather, focus on *the young*, the lower *sefirot* engendered by *Binah*.

See *Bahir* 74 (104–105); Naḥmanides and Recanati on Deuteronomy 22:6; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Berakhot* 33b; *Ḥullin* 142a; *Zohar* 2:8a, 93a; 3:254a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 338–39.

478. ***primal days…from one end of heaven to the other*** The cosmic days of Creation from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, above and below *Tif'eret*, known as *heaven*. See BT *Ḥagigah* 11b; *Zohar* 1:141b.

479. **All these are called *mountains of spices*** Rabbi Ḥizkiyah is apparently playing on בשמים (*besamim*), *spices*, and בשמים (*ba-shamayim*), "in heaven." See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 8:14.

480. ***From there it divides*** The full verse reads: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four riverheads*. In Kabbalah this refers to the stream of emanation flowing from the highest sefirotic sources to the *garden* of *Shekhinah* and then to the worlds below.

481. **mountains of division** The forces outside *Shekhinah*, not included in the unified realm of the *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 1:29b, 62a; 2:234a–b.

482. **Sons of the maids joined joints—joints essential for arrayal** Bilhah and Zilpah, the maids of Rachel and Leah, gave birth to Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. On the sefirotic role played by these four sons, see above, page 360.

483. **those joints protrude… From here on, all are one in a straight line** See above, page 360.

484. **He saw…that Esau's adversary had been born** Joseph represents the adversary of Esau, so once he was born, Jacob no longer feared returning to Canaan, Esau's abode. See Obadiah 1:18; *Bereshit Rabbah* 73:7; BT *Bava Batra* 123b.

485. **Joseph completed his realm with his site… Righteous One** Joseph completed Jacob's realm, *Tif'eret*, by attaining his own site, the rung of *Yesod*, which is linked to *Tif'eret*.

Yesod is known as Righteous One, based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse literally means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, but is understood as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

In rabbinic literature Joseph is granted the title Righteous in recognition of resisting the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. See Genesis 39; BT *Yoma* 35b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 93:7; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, nispaḥim*, 460; above, pages 357–59. Cf. *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 5, and *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 38, which cite Amos 2:6.

486. **consummation of the body** *Tif'eret* is the torso of the body, which is consummated by *Yesod*, the divine phallus. See above, pages 333, 358.

487. **He is consummation of the body; yet even so, Benjamin…** Though Joseph symbolizes consummation of the body, Benjamin actually completed the total of twelve tribes.

488. **If all those tribes are completed here…** Then *Shekhinah* will rest upon them here in Paddan Aram (Mesopotamia), whereas Her proper site is the land of Israel. See the statement attributed to Rabbi El'azar son of Tsadok in *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1: "*Shekhinah* is not revealed outside the land [of Israel]."

489. **all those twelve tribes comprise the adornment of the lower world** Of *Shekhinah*. See above, pages 365, 377.

490. ***Rachel, alas, died in the land of Canaan*** As she was giving birth to Benjamin. See Genesis 35:16–19.

491. **settling in a completed house** Among the full complement of twelve tribes. See *Zohar* 1:158b, 160b,

174a, 175b.

On *Shekhinah* as Jacob's wife, see *Zohar* 1:21b, 133a, 138b, 236b; 3:187b.

492. **Why didn't Leah die at the same time?** After all, she had mothered half of the twelve tribes.

493. **house belonged to the lower world...** The twelve tribes belonged to the lower world, *Shekhinah* (symbolized by Rachel), and were intended to adorn Her, not the higher world, *Binah* (symbolized by Leah). So Leah's death was unnecessary.

494. **Leah's death is not mentioned...** It is not recorded in the Torah. See Naḥmanides on Genesis 35:8.

495. **Leah was concealed in the Cave... while Rachel in revealment...** On Leah's burial in the cave, see Genesis 49:31. On Rachel's burial on the road to Ephrat, see ibid. 35:19; 48:7.

496. **So all blessings partake of two worlds, revealed and concealed** The Hebrew formula of blessing begins by addressing God directly in the second person (revealed): "Blessed are You, *YHVH*," but then it switches to the third person (concealed): "... who has hallowed us by His commandments ..." For Rabbi El'azar these two grammatical persons represent two aspects of divine personality: *Shekhinah* (revealed) and *Binah* (concealed).

See *Bahir* 125 (184); Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, 134–35; Naḥmanides on Exodus 15:26; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Berakhot* 12a; *Zohar* 1:18a; 3:271b, 289a (*IZ*) (and *NZ*, ad loc., n. 6); *TZ* 39, 79b; *Kolbo* 1.

497. ***For daughters* אשרוני (*ishsheruni*), *will deem me happy*** The verse continues: *So she named him* אשר (*Asher*), *Asher*. When Zilpah, Leah's maid, gave birth to a son, Leah named him Asher.

498. **Because of Her, she named him אשר (*Asher*), *Asher*** Rabbi El'azar interprets *Asher* as alluding to *Binah*. See *Zohar* 1:15a, 246a. In Hebrew this name is identical with the opening word of the third-person phrase cited in the

note before last: "אשר (*asher*), who, has hallowed us by His commandments," which also alludes to *Binah*.

499. ***Blessed be YHVH, God of Israel, from world to world*** *YHVH* refers to *Tif'eret*, the blessed Holy One. On the phrase *from world to world*, see M *Berakhot* 9:5; *Zohar* 1:34a, 153b, 248b; 2:22a, 53b; 3:145b, 285b, 297b.

500. **So we call higher world הוא (*Hu*), He, and lower world אתה (*Attah*), You** The third-person pronoun indicates *Binah*, who, being concealed, can be referred to only indirectly. The second-person pronoun indicates *Shekhinah*, who, being revealed, can be addressed directly. See above, pages 361–62.

501. **Since He is blessed from the higher world... from the lower world...** Since *YHVH*, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, is blessed from *Binah* (higher world), He is also blessed from *Shekhinah* (lower world). The blessing from *Shekhinah* derives from righteous action on earth and is conveyed to *Tif'eret* via *Yesod* (Righteous One), who is known as *Zion* and dwells in *Jerusalem* (symbolizing *Shekhinah*).

502. יהוה יהוה **(*YHVH, YHVH*)—two times, two worlds...** Alluding to *Shekhinah* and *Binah*.

503. **separated by a punctuation mark...** In the Masoretic text the two occurrences of the name are separated by a vertical line. See *Zohar* 1:120a–b; 3:138a (*IR*), 187b, 289b (*IR*).

504. **Why not the other time?** When later Jacob fled secretly from Laban. See Genesis 31:17–21.

505. **twelve tribes would be completed in an alien land** See above, page 380.

506. **once Benjamin was born, *Shekhinah* linked Herself with all those tribes...** See above, page 380.

507. **Lower world was destined for Jacob as She was for Moses** *Shekhinah* was destined to unite with Jacob as well as Moses, since both of these male biblical heroes symbolize *Tif'eret*. According to rabbinic tradition, after encountering God on Mount Sinai, Moses abstained from

sexual contact with his wife and maintained union with *Shekhinah*.

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 99; BT *Shabbat* 87a; *Tanḥuma, Tsav* 13; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 7:6; *Zohar* 1:22a, 152b, 234b; 2:222a; 3:148a, 180a.

508. **She possessed the house with all those tribes** *Shekhinah* obtained the house.

509. **עקרא דביתא (*iqqara de-veita*)... עקרת הבית (*aqeret ha-bayit*)...** The verse in Psalms reads: *He settles* עקרת הבית (*aqeret ha-bayit*), *the barren woman in her home, as a joyous mother of children*. Following midrashic tradition, Rabbi Yehudah interprets the word עקרת (*aqeret*), *barren woman*, as עיקר (*iqqar*), "essence."

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 71:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 20:2; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayetse* 15; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:8; *Zohar* 1:29a–b, 50a, 149b, 154a, 157b.

510. **world above** *Shekhinah*.

511. **this poor woman** Rachel.

512. **If she dies here, I will never escape. Furthermore...** If Rachel gives birth to Benjamin and dies here in Paddan Aram, then *Shekhinah* will find a home here among the twelve tribes and I will have to stay along with Her, whereas the land of Israel is the intended site for both Her and them. See above, page 380.

513. ***When Rachel had given birth to Joseph*** The verse continues: *Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way, so I may go to my place and my land."*

514. **Why didn't he set out on his way immediately?** Why didn't Jacob leave Laban right after Joseph was born, rather than staying another six years? See Genesis 31:41.

515. ***Moses returned to Jethro his father-in-law...*** The full verse reads: *Moses returned to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me go return to my brothers in Egypt and see if they are still alive." Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."*

516. **perfect** שלים (*Shelim*), “Complete, perfect,” borrowed from *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 25:27, where Jacob—in contrast to Esau the hunter—is described as תם (*tam*), “simple, innocent, plain, mild, quiet, sound, wholesome.”

517. **when he told him at first, he immediately spun schemes…** That is, Jacob told Laban, who then spun schemes. See Genesis 30:25–36; and above, pages 382–83.

518. **Laban was a sorcerer…** On Laban’s powers of witchcraft, see Genesis 30:27; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and *Sekhel Tov*, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:133b, 139b, 161a, 164b, 166b–167b.

519. ***Return to the land of your fathers…*** The verse continues: *and your birthplace, and I will be with you*. See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayetse* 23.

520. ***God remembered Rachel…*** The verse continues: *God listened to her and opened her womb*.

521. ***Of the sons of Korah, upon* עלמות (*alamot*)…** Eleven psalms are associated with the sons of Korah, who were a guild of Temple singers or musicians. See Numbers 26:11; 2 Chronicles 20:19.

The technical term *alamot* may refer to an instrument such as a flute or express a vocal quality, perhaps “youthful” (soprano), based on עלמה (*almah*), “maiden, damsel.” See Psalms 9:1; 48:15; 1 Chronicles 15:20.

522. **all his associates** All those who are mentioned in the headings of various Psalms.

523. **lower world corresponding to the higher world** A general principle of Kabbalah. See *Zohar* 1:38a, 57b–58a, 129a, 145b, 156b, 205b; 2:15b (*MhN*), 20a (*MhN*), 48b, 82b, 144a, 251a (*Heikh*); 3:45b, 65b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:273.

524. **All those arrayals arrayed by David and Solomon…** The rotating divisions of priests and Levites in the Temple. See 1 Chronicles 23–26; Nehemiah 12:45–46; M *Ta’anit* 4:2; *Tosefta, Ta’anit* 3:2.

525. **entirely according to the supernal pattern** Corresponding to the angelic choir. On the heavenly and earthly temples, see *Mekhilta, Shirta* 10; IT *Berakhot* 4:5, 8c; *Tanḥuma, Vayaqhel* 7; *Pequdei* 1–3; *Shemot Rabbah* 33:4; *Midrash Tehillim* 30:1.

526. **Just as there are watches on earth...** The term משמרות (*mishmarot*) refers both to the rotating divisions in the Temple and to the three "watches" of the night. See BT *Berakhot* 3a: "There are *mishmarot*, watches, in heaven, and there are watches on earth."

See *Zohar* 1:189a, 231a–b; 2:173a–b, 195b; 3:64b; *ZḤ* 6a (*MhN*).

527. **chanting song constantly** See BT *Ḥagigah* 14a; *Ḥullin* 91b.

528. **What is *Alamot*... ועלמות (*va-alamot*), *and damsels*...** As mentioned above (note 521), the technical term *alamot* may in fact derive from עלמה (*almah*), "damsel, maiden."

529. **As is said: *Is there any number to his troops?*** Just as in this verse from Job the innumerable troops are angels, similarly in Song of Songs the innumerable damsels are angels.

530. **Three arrays... three other arrays** Each of the three divisions of angels comprises three subdivisions. The same passage appears in *Zohar* 2:228a–b.

531. **to the east** Corresponding to *Tif'eret*.

532. **These nine arrays are conducted by engraved letters...** The angels are conducted by letters, as is about to be explained.

533. **they stir** The angels stir, stimulated by the motion of the letters.

534. **becoming three letters, all corresponding to...יה״ו (*yod, he, vav*)** The three letters form into a permutation of יה״ו (*yod, he, vav*), the three components of the name יהוה (*YHVH*).

See *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:13; *Zohar* 1:43b (*Heikh*), 51a; 3:17a, 74b–75a; *ZḤ* 66d (*ShS*), 68b–c (*ShS*); *TZ* 69, 111b.

535. **resplendent speculum** אספקלריא דנהרא (*Ispaqlarya de-nahara*), "A speculum [or: glass, mirror, lens] that shines." See BT *Yevamot* 49b: "All the prophets gazed through a dim glass [literally: an *ispaqlarya* that does not shine], whereas Moses our teacher gazed through a clear glass [literally: an *ispaqlarya* that shines]." Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face-to-face."

In the *Zohar, Shekhinah* is the *ispaqlarya* that does not shine on its own but rather reflects the other *sefirot*, while *Tif'eret* is the *ispaqlarya* that shines. Here Rabbi Abba indicates that the three letters derive from *Tif'eret*, associated with the name יהוה (*YHVH*).

536. **Those two supernal letters... compassion with judgment** The letter י (*yod*) symbolizes *Ḥokhmah* and the right side of the *sefirot*, characterized by compassion. The letter ו (*vav*) symbolizes *Tif'eret* and the middle sefirotic column, which includes judgment on the left. See Vital, cited in *MM*. For a different interpretation, see *OY*.

537. **two, from the supernal world in mystery of male** These two letters symbolize two components of the World of the Male, which extends from *Ḥokhmah* (united with *Binah*) through *Yesod*.

538. **one ascending, joining them, is female** The letter ה (*he*) symbolizes the feminine.

539. **Just as female is embraced by two sides, right and left** Just as *Shekhinah* is embraced by the two sefirotic arms, *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*.

540. **supernal world** The sefirotic realm, specifically *Binah*, storehouse of letters.

541. **engendering all works below...** Creation unfolds through the letters of the alphabet. According to *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:1–2, God created the world by means of "thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom," namely, the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the ten *sefirot*.

542. **whoever knows them and is mindful of them is beloved...** Similar wording appears concerning the forty-

two-letter divine name (in BT *Qiddushin* 71a) and the twelve-letter divine name (*Bahir* 80 [111]). See BT *Berakhot* 17a; *Zohar* 1:45b (*Heikh*), 152b, 242b; 2:46a, 228a.

543. **All those letters are male and female** Rabbi Abba had said that י (*yod*) and ו (*vav*) are masculine, while ה (*he*) is feminine. Rabbi Shim'on teaches that all the letters are either male or female, as clarified below.

544. **upper waters and lower waters** Symbolizing the male and female sefirotic potencies. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:13: "Rabbi Shim'on son of El'azar said, 'Every single handbreadth [of water] descending from above is met by two handbreadths emitted by the earth. What is the reason? *Deep calls to deep*... (Psalms 42:8).' Rabbi Levi said, 'The upper waters are male; the lower, female. The former cry to the latter, "Receive us! You are creatures of the blessed Holy One and we are His messengers." They immediately receive them, as is written: *Let the earth open* (Isaiah 45:8)—like a female opening to a male.'"

See *Tosefta, Ta'anit* 1:4; 1 Enoch 54:8; *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 10 (*Battei Midrashot*, 1:25); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 23; *Zohar* 1:17b, 29b, 46a, 60b, 62a, 244a–b, 245b; 3:223b.

According to the second-century Greek physician Galen, sperm is generated by both male and female. See Leviticus 12:2; Ibn Ezra, Naḥmanides, Baḥya ben Asher, and Sforno, ad loc.; BT *Berakhot* 60a; *Niddah* 31a.

545. **Three, three, on this side and on that side** Three arrays of angels on the right and on the left.

546. **corresponding above; for that array is three, three—in single mystery** The triadic array of angels correponds to the sefirotic realm, which is also arranged in triads.

547. **to the south** Corresponding to *Ḥesed*.

548. **becoming one in the mystery of the complete holy name** The various male and female letters unite

according to the pattern of the name יהוה (*YHVH*), in which the first and third letters are masculine; the second and fourth, feminine.

549. **appointed arrays** Of angels.

550. **array of supernal Patriarchs, according to… יה״ו (*yod, he, vav*)** The triad of *Ḥesed, Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the three patriarchs, corresponds to the triad of letters יה״ו (*yod, he, vav*). Here *yod* symbolizes the right; *he*, the left; and *vav*, the center.

551. **Countless forces and princes, all below** Lower angelic powers.

552. **to the north** Corresponding to *Gevurah*.

553. **Although they are twenty-two… twenty-seven** The full Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-two letters plus five final letters.

554. **nine letters in mystery of female… eighteen others…** Apparently the numbers nine and eighteen denote nine times the single female letter, ה (*he*), and nine times the two male letters, י (*yod*) and ו (*vav*). See also the list of letters in the note appended to *ZḤ* 74d–75a (*ShS*).

555. **supernal letters… other letters… High letters… low letters…** The large letters derive from *Binah*, the higher sefirotic realm, while the small letters derive from *Shekhinah*, the lower realm.

See *Zohar* 1:3b; 2:132a, 174a, 180b; 3:2a, 220a; *ZḤ* 66c (*ShS*), 74c (*ShS*).

556. ויזכור אלהים **(*Va-yizkor Elohim*), *God remembered, Rachel*** The verse continues: *God listened to her and opened her womb*.

557. **flux of destiny** מזלא (*Mazzala*), on which childbirth depends, according to BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 28a: "Rava said, 'Life, children, and sustenance do not depend on merit but on *mazzala*, destiny.'"

The word *mazzala* means "constellation, planet, planetary influence, destiny, guardian angel." In the *Zohar* it is associated with the root נזל (*nzl*), "to flow," and often refers

to the flow of emanation from the World of the Male, which comprises *Binah* through *Yesod*, the divine phallus. *Yesod* conveys this flow to *Shekhinah*, thereby engendering souls of the newborn.

See *Zohar* 1:43b (*Heikh*), 115a, 137a, 156b, 160b, 181a, 207b; 2:6a, 252b (*Heikh*); 3:25b, 77b, 134b (*IR*), 289a (*IZ*), 292b (*IZ*), 295b (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 193; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 65 (82); Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 12a, 37a–b, 74a, 95a.

558. **with her זכירה (*zekhirah*), remembering, is mentioned** Concerning Rachel's conceiving of Joseph, the verb זכר (*zkhr*) appears, since this root means both "to remember" and "male," alluding to the masculine potency of the divine phallus, *Yesod*, symbolized by Joseph.

The name *Elohim* may refer here to *Binah*, from whom *Yesod* receives the flow, or to *Shekhinah*, recipient of the flow.

559. ***And YHVH attended to Sarah*—not from the flux of destiny** Concerning Sarah's conceiving of Isaac, the verb זכר (*zkhr*) does not appear; rather, the verb is פקד (*pqd*), "to attend," since the focus is not on *Yesod* but on *Shekhinah*, who is associated with the latter verb. See above, page 174.

560. **not below!** Not on *Shekhinah*, beneath *Yesod*.

561. **However, it is written: ויהוה (*Va-YHVH*), *And YHVH*, all as one** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:2: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'Wherever it is said: *And YHVH*, this implies: He and His Court.'" In Kabbalah this court symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment") and pronounces the divine decree, so the phrase *And YHVH* encompasses "He [*Tif'eret*, known as *YHVH*] and His Court [*Shekhinah*]."

Here the point is that the male divine potency (*Tif'eret* and *Yesod*) was involved along with *Shekhinah* in Sarah's conceiving of Isaac.

See JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14b; Rashi on Exodus 12:29; *Zohar* 1:15b, 64b, 105a, 107b; 2:37b, 44b; 3:149a. The hermeneutical significance of *and* was championed by Rabbi Akiva. See BT *Yevamot* 68b; *Sanhedrin* 51b.

562. **If so, why is ‘attending’ mentioned?** If both the male and female potencies were involved, why specify “attending,” which indicates only *Shekhinah*?

563. **‘remembering’ happened previously … *My covenant*…** The participation of *Yesod* (“remembering”) is already implied in the prediction of Isaac’s birth by the word *covenant*, referring to the covenant of circumcision associated with the divine phallus. Subsequently, the key of childbirth was transmitted to *Shekhinah*, who *attended to Sarah*.

On the key of childbirth, see BT *Ta’anit* 2a–b. The verse from Genesis concludes: *at this appointed time next year*.

564. **Similarly later…** The wording of the later verse, *And YHVH attended to Sarah*, implies that *Shekhinah* figured prominently along with the male potency.

565. ***God remembered Rachel*** The verse continues: *God listened to her and opened her womb*.

566. **Here זכירה (*zekhirah*), remembering, for this is above…** The word זכירה (*zekhirah*), “remembering,” alludes to זכר (*zakhar*), “male” (Aramaic, דכורא [*dekhora*]). The divine male potency united with *Shekhinah*, who is associated with the root פקד (*pqd*), “attend.” On the “flux of destiny,” see above, note 557.

Shekhinah accompanied the Children of Israel in their Egyptian exile. See BT *Megillah* 29a: “Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai says, ‘Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them…. When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them…. And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them.’” See *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 14.

Here Rabbi Ḥiyya indicates that the male divinity responded to the exile by uniting with His female partner, who was suffering along with Her people. This reunion initiates the redemption of both *Shekhinah* and Israel.

567. ויזכור אלהים (***Va-yizkor Elohim***), ***God remembered, Rachel…*** As indicated above in note 558, Rachel's conceiving of Joseph is marked by the verb זכר (*zkhr*), meaning both "to remember" and "male"—an allusion to the divine phallus, *Yesod*, symbolized by Joseph.

The name *Elohim* may refer here to *Binah*, from whom *Yesod* receives the flow, or to *Shekhinah*, recipient of the flow. The reference to *covenant* reinforces the link with *Yesod*, who is associated with the covenant of circumcision.

Further, Rachel may here symbolize *Shekhinah*, who shares the designation *covenant* with *Yesod*. According to this reading, both statements (*God remembered Rachel* and *I have remembered My covenant*) refer to the union of the divine male (*zkhr*) and female (*Rachel, covenant*).

568. ***I have surely attended to you*** Meaning, *I have surely given heed to you*. The verse concludes: *and to what is being done to you in Egypt*. God declared this to Moses at the Burning Bush.

569. **how could She say, *I have surely attended*?** Since *Shekhinah* Herself suffered exile and bondage along with Israel, how could She attend to Israel and promise to redeem them? She couldn't redeem even Herself, since after all, "a prisoner cannot free himself from jail." See BT *Berakhot* 5b; *TZ* 6, 21b–22a.

570. **If She was in exile, how could She manifest to Moses here?** If *Shekhinah* was confined to bondage in Egypt, how could She manifest to Moses in Midian at the Burning Bush? Normally, *Shekhinah* reveals Herself only in the land of Israel. See the statement attributed to Rabbi El'azar son of Tsadok in *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 1: "*Shekhinah* is not revealed outside the land [of Israel]."

571. ***full of His presence*** Full of *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence.

572. **As long as the Temple stood, *the whole earth*…the Holy Land** As long as the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing, *Shekhinah* dwelled there, Her presence

permeating the land of Israel and from there extending abroad. The word ארץ (*arets*) means both “earth” and “land.”

573. **Now that Israel is in exile, She is above, while Her power envelops Israel…** From one perspective *Shekhinah* is exiled along with Israel, while from another perspective She has withdrawn from earth and dwells in heaven, protecting Israel powerfully from above, wherever they are. See *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 24.

574. ***Shekhinah* above, *Shekhinah* below** See *Midrash Konen* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:33); *Bahir* 116 (171).

575. ***Shekhinah* above in twelve dominions, holy chariots… creatures** Surrounding and escorting *Shekhinah*. The chariots transport Her through heaven. The angelic creatures derive from Ezekiel’s theophany (1:5–19).

On the twelve dominions, see *Zohar* 1:76b–77a (*ST*), 156a (*ST*), 199a; 2:8a, 58b, 62b, 64b, 66b, 229b; 3:78a, 96b, 118b, 138a (*IR*), 148a–b.

576. ***Shekhinah* below among twelve holy tribes** See above, pages 365, 377.

577. **although when Israel is in exile and She is disarrayed…** Lacking Israel’s accompaniment below, She is also isolated above.

578. **This is exile along with Israel, for She shares with them in exile** While the people of Israel suffer below, She suffers above. See the view of Rabbi Shim’on cited above, note 566.

579. **How is She arrayed?** Now, during this period of exile.

580. **overturned his bed** Dismantling one’s bed and sleeping on a mattress on the floor are an expression of mourning. See BT *Mo’ed Qatan* 15a–b, 27a; *Semaḥot* 6:1.

581. **took thorns and thistles…*from within a bush*…** *Shekhinah, the angel of YHVH,* appeared to Moses out of a thornbush to symbolize the pain She was experiencing on account of Israel’s suffering in Egypt.

See *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 14; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 40; *Midrash Tehillim 27:2; Shemot Rabbah* 2:5. On *the angel of YHVH* as a name of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:61a, 113a, 120b, 166a, 230a; 3:187a. Cf. *Mekhilta, Shirta* 3.

582. **outside his domain and no longer his own master** דלא קיימא ברשותיה (*De-la qayema birshuteih*), which bears both meanings.

583. **how can he attend? What can he do?** How could *Shekhinah*, weakened in exile, respond to Israel's suffering or redeem them?

584. **But *paqod* from above, *paqadti* below** The duplicated verb implies "attending" both above and below.

585. **Because *zekhirah*, remembering, had rested upon Her previously...** Once *Shekhinah* was attended to and empowered by masculine remembering from above, She Herself could attend to Israel.

Actually, the verse *I have remembered My covenant* (Exodus 6:5) comes after the verse *I have surely attended to you* (ibid. 3:16), but a nearly identical formulation appears in Exodus 2:24: *God remembered His covenant*. On the sexual connotation of פקד (*pqd*), "attend," see Genesis 21:1, cited below; *Bereshit Rabbah* 53:6; *Sekhel Tov*, Genesis 21:1.

586. **She had already grasped a sign** Of deliverance. According to midrashic tradition, the duplicated verbal form of פקד (*pqd*) signifies redemption.

See Genesis 50:24–25; *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 24; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 48; *Shemot Rabbah* 3:8; 5:13; *Bereshit Rabbah* 97(98):6; Rashi and Naḥmanides on Exodus 3:18.

587. **Similarly with Sarah: ויהוה פקד (*Va-YHVH paqad*)...** The verb פקד (*pqd*) appears explicitly, but the male divine potency was also involved. See above, note 561.

588. **But here—with Rachel, who had not been 'remembered' previously...** Since no indication of masculine remembering had appeared previously, now it

does: ויזכור אלהים (*Va-yizkor Elohim*), *God remembered, Rachel; God listened to her and opened her womb*.

589. **flux of destiny** See above, note 557.

590. **from Cappadocia to Lydda** This improbable journey from eastern Asia Minor to a city in Palestine recurs frequently in the *Zohar* and usually (though not here) includes an encounter with some surprising character. See 1:69b, 132a, 138a (*MhN*), 197b, 223a; 2:31a, 38b, 80b, 86a; 3:35a, 75b, 221b; *ZḤ* 22a (*MhN*).

The itinerary seems to be intentionally fantastic, though perhaps the author(s) imagined that Cappadocia was a Galilean village near Sepphoris, based on the phrase "Cappadocians of Sepphoris" in JT *Shevi'it* 9:5, 39a. According to a dream interpretation in *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:12, Cappadocia is not far at all from Palestine. Cappadocia figures prominently in M *Ketubbot* 13:11 and BT *Ketubbot* 110b, while Cappadocia and Lydda are linked in *Tosefta, Yevamot* 4:5 and BT *Yevamot* 25b.

See Scholem, in *Zion* (*Me'assef*) 1 (1926): 40–46 (and the appended note by S. Klein, 56); idem, *Major Trends*, 169; idem, *Kabbalah*, 222; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:63–64.

591. **Rabbi Yehudah dismounted and said, "… let us engage in Torah"** Out of respect for the sanctity of Torah, he first dismounts from his donkey. See *Tosefta, Ḥagigah* 2:1, where Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai dismounts from his donkey to hear an exposition of *ma'aseh merkavah*, "the account of the chariot," from Rabbi El'azar son of Arakh, who had been driving the donkey from behind.

Cf. BT *Ḥagigah* 14b; JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77a; *Zohar* 1:6a.

592. הבו (***Havu***)**, *Render, greatness to our God!*** The full verse reads: *When I proclaim the name of YHVH, render greatness to our God!* See BT *Berakhot* 21a: "Rabbi Yehudah said, 'Where do we find that a blessing before [reading] the Torah is ordained in the Torah? Because it

says: *When I proclaim the name of YHVH, render greatness to our God!'"*

In Kabbalah, Torah is pictured as one continuous divine name. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 37–44. By engaging in Torah, one celebrates and glorifies God.

593. **If we were three, this would be fitting...** The verb הבו (*havu*), *render*, is in the plural, so if one person would *proclaim the name of YHVH* by expounding Torah, then two could *render greatness* by responding to his words.

594. **This applies only to blessings...** Specifically to the grace after meals. See BT *Berakhot* 45a: "Three who have eaten together must invite [one another to say grace]... From where is this derived?... Rabbi Abbahu said, 'From here: *When I proclaim the name of YHVH, render greatness to our God!'"* See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 306.

595. **But with Torah, even two...** See M *Avot* 3:2: "Rabbi Ḥanina son of Teradyon says, '... If two are sitting engaged in Torah, *Shekhinah* dwells between them.'"

On the importance of engaging in Torah while on a journey, see Deuteronomy 6:7; BT *Eruvin* 54a; *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 69b–70a, 76a, 87a, 115b, 157a; and the extreme formulation in BT *Ta'anit* 10b: "Rabbi Il'ai son of Berekhiah said, 'Two disciples of the wise who are walking on the way and are not engaged in words of Torah deserve to be burned.'"

596. **as is written: *Render greatness!*** With the verb in the plural. See above, notes 593 and 594.

597. **two to respond** With "Amen." Actually, only concerning the grace after meals are two required to respond with "Amen." For all other blessings, even one can respond. On the significance of "Amen," see BT *Berakhot* 53b; *Zohar* 3:271a, 285a–b.

598. **fulfillment of blessings in... mystery of three...** Corresponding to the triadic structure of the *sefirot*.

599. **there is remembering for good and remembering for evil...** See M *Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:6; BT

Rosh ha-Shanah 32a–b.

600. **פקידה (*Peqidah*), Attending, for good… *Peqidah* for evil…** See *Pesiqta Rabbati* 42; *Tanḥuma, Bemidbar* 21.

601. **rememberings and attendings for good are well-known rungs…** Corresponding to the male and female couple in the sefirotic realm, mystery of faith: *Tif'eret* (or *Yesod*) and *Shekhinah*. See above, pages 388–92.

602. **Other Side** The demonic realm.

603. **Remembering and attending for evil… other gods…** Corresponding to the demonic male and female couple: Samael and Lilith. On the phrase "other gods," see Exodus 20:3: *You shall have no other gods besides Me*.

604. **From here issue all mysteries of faith…** From remembering and attending for good.

605. **From here issue all injuries, all evil…** From remembering and attending for evil.

606. **wage war against that side!** Against evil and against the evil impulse.

607. **He opened, saying** Rabbi Yehudah opened in reply.

608. **on account of his side** The Other Side, led by Samael, who empowered Esau.

609. **dealing with him as tortuously as necessary** See above, pages 269–72.

610. **single pattern…בכרתי (*bekhorati*)…ברכתי (*birkhati*)…** First, Jacob cunningly obtained Esau's birthright (Genesis 25:29–34), and later he deceived Isaac into giving him Esau's blessing. Immediately afterward the wronged son complained bitterly to his father: *He's deceived me these two times: he took* בכרתי (*bekhorati*), *my birthright, and look, now he's taken* ברכתי (*birkhati*), *my blessing!* (Genesis 27:36).

Rabbi Yehudah highlights the fact that the two words are anagrams. See above, page 308; *Zohar* 2:111a.

611. **Prevail against him precisely…** First obtaining the *birthright*, then the firstborn's *blessing*.

612. ***They will follow YHVH, roaring like a lion*** In the biblical context, the second phrase refers to God: *He will roar like a lion*. However, Rabbi Yehudah applies it to the human strivers. See BT *Berakhot* 6b; *Zohar* 1:223a; 3:79b; *ZḤ* 21d (*MhN*).

613. **as with Ezra who said...** The words are actually spoken by Nehemiah. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally referred to by the name Ezra alone. See BT *Sukkah* 37a, *Bava Batra* 14b; *Sanhedrin* 93b; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 16:7; *Zohorei Ya'bets*.

614. **Wherever a person prays, he should merge in multitude...** He should include himself with the entire community and formulate his prayer in the plural ("Remember us!"), not the singular ("Remember me!"), so as not to call attention to himself and make himself vulnerable to demonic forces who can expose his sins.

See BT *Berakhot* 30a, regarding formulations of prayer: "Abbaye said, 'A person should always associate himself with the Community.'" See ibid. 49b: "Samuel said, 'A person should never exclude himself from the entire community.'"

See ibid. 7b–8a; *Zohar* 1:167b, 234a; 2:245b (*Heikh*).

615. **Shunammite** The wealthy woman from the town of Shunem who fed and housed the prophet Elisha. She was rewarded with a son, who later died but was resuscitated by Elisha. See 2 Kings 4:8–36; *Zohar* 1:69b; 2:33b, 44b.

616. **That day was Rosh Hashanah** The day referred to in 2 Kings 4:8: *One day Elisha was passing through Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, and she urged him to have a meal*. Similarly, according to a midrashic tradition, the phrase *one day* in Job 1:6 refers to Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment.

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra on Job 1:6; *Midrash Iyyov*, ad. loc (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:158); *Zohar* 3:231a.

617. **the time the blessed Holy One is called King** Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, God is addressed

in the liturgy as “Holy King” and “King of Judgment.” See BT *Berakhot* 12b.

618. **so they won’t notice him…** So demonic “remembering and attending” won’t notice him.

619. ***He will slay me***, לא איחל **(*lo ayaḥel*)…** According to the Masoretic text, the word *lo* is spelled לא (*lo*) with an א (*alef*), meaning *no*, but should be read לו (*lo*) with a ו (*vav*), meaning *in Him*. The two alternative spellings yield radically different readings: *See, He will slay me; I have no hope*, or: *Though He slay me, in Him will I hope*. According to Rabbi Yehudah, the ambiguous spelling is intentional, encompassing both contradictory declarations and reflecting Job’s torment.

See M *Sotah* 5:5; BT *Sotah* 31a; *Midrash Tanna’im*, Deuteronomy 14:2.

620. **on that side** The Other Side, the demonic.

621. ***death*, as has been said, Angel of Death…** Lilith, the demonic feminine. See *Zohar* 1:148a–b (*ST*).

622. צלמות **(*tsalmavet*), *darkness*—צל מות (*tsel mavet*), *shadow of death*** This etymology appears frequently in *Targum Yonatan*, e.g., Isaiah 9:1; Psalms 23:4; Job 10:22. See *Zohar* 2:242b.

623. **riding upon it, its shadow and potency, coupling as one…** Shadowy Samael rides the serpent Lilith, empowering her. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13: “Samael… took his band and descended and saw all the creatures created by the blessed Holy One. He determined that the most cunningly evil was the serpent, as is said: *Now the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had made*. He [the serpent] looked like a camel, and he [Samael] mounted and rode him.”

See *Zohar* 1:35b, 64a, 137b, 146a, 148a (*ST*), 153a.

624. ***Lift up your heads, O gates!…*** The verse continues in parallelism: *Be lifted up, openings of eternity! So the King of Glory may come*.

625. **those gates being rivers and streams, six directions of the world** The gates referred to in Psalms are holy gates, the six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, who convey the flow of emanation. See *Zohar* 1:103b; 3:253, 253b (*RM*).

The term "six directions" (above, below, north, south, east, and west) derives from *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:13.

626. ***whoever goes down to Sheol rises no more*** According to the Talmudic sage Rava, with these words Job denied the resurrection of the dead. See BT *Bava Batra* 16a.

627. **One from World of the Male** The first *Elohim* designates *Binah*. Although She is often depicted as Divine Mother, *Binah* is also called "World of the Male," encompassing the entire configuration of *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, who constitute a masculine entity ready to join *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:96a, 147a, 149a, 246a–247a, 248b; 2:127b; *ZḤ* 72b (*ShS*). Cf. 1:17b, 46b, 163a; 2:4a.

628. **one from World of the Female** The second *Elohim* designates the divine feminine, *Shekhinah*.

629. **depends on the flux of destiny** Childbirth depends on the flow of emanation from *Binah* through *Yesod* to *Shekhinah*. See above, note 557.

630. **When Rachel was aroused by this name…** According to the verse, when Rachel gave birth to her first son, *she named him* יוסף (*Yosef*), *Joseph, saying, "May YHVH* יוסף (*yosef*), *add, another son to me!"* Rachel was aroused, or inspired, by the duplication of *Elohim* to invent the name *Yosef* (*May He add*), which indicated to Jacob that soon another son (Benjamin) would be born, completing the twelve tribes. Once the tribes were complete, Rachel would have to die, as explained below. See above, pages 380–83.

631. **So he wanted to leave… he fled…** Jacob wanted to be sure that "the house," the full array of twelve tribes, would be completed in the Holy Land, not in an alien land,

so that *Shekhinah* (“the holy world”) would join with them in an appropriate setting. He wanted to leave Laban as soon as Joseph was born, but his departure was delayed some six years (see Genesis 31:41). Once Rachel conceived Benjamin, he could wait no longer, so he fled. See above, pages 379–83.

632. ***Elohim said to Jacob…*** The Masoretic text reads: יהוה (*YHVH*) *said to Jacob…*, as do the printed editions of the *Zohar* and certain manuscripts. However, according to the earlier recension of the *Zohar* preserved by several manuscripts, Rabbi Yehudah cites the reading *Elohim*, enabling him to show that *Shekhinah* was speaking to Jacob. See *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 10; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayetse* 21.

633. **really telling him: ‘Until now Rachel was with you…’** *Shekhinah* was telling Jacob that now She would replace Rachel. On *Shekhinah* as Jacob’s wife, see *Zohar* 1:21b, 133a, 138b, 236b; 3:187b.

On the phrase “essence of the house,” see above, note 509.

634. ***Rachel died* עלי (*alai*), *upon me…*** The verse continues: *in the land of Canaan*—as she was giving birth to Benjamin. See Genesis 35:16–19. The word עלי (*alai*) means literally, “upon me, on me,” though it apparently connotes “alas, to my sorrow” (see Psalms 42:6–7). Here, drawing on midrashic tradition, Rabbi Yehudah reads it hyperliterally “upon me, on account of me.”

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 37:1; *Aggadat Bereshit* 52:1; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 31:32; *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:9; *Zohar* 1:175a, 223a.

635. **another dweller came…** *Shekhinah*, the indwelling Presence. See above, pages 380–83.

636. **That wicked one** Laban.

637. **I see that Jacob rivets his eyes upon נוקבי (*nuqvei*),** females Because of his love for Rachel, Jacob had offered to serve Laban in exchange for her. See Genesis 29:18.

638. **I did for the glory of the Holy King** To engender twelve tribes as a fitting site for *Shekhinah*.

639. **Rather, *if you will do this for me…*** The verse continues: *I will go back and tend your flock, watching over them*. Jacob asks Laban instead to give him all of the dark-colored sheep and the white-spotted goats, both of which are relatively rare.

640. ***That day he removed the streaked and spotted he-goats…*** The verse continues: *and all the speckled and spotted she-goats—every one that had white on it—and every dark-colored lamb, and handed them over to his sons*. Laban slyly removes all of the unusually colored animals that Jacob sought for his wages.

641. ***He who walks blamelessly and does what** is righteous…* The verse continues: *and speaks the truth from his heart*.

642. ***He who walks* תמים (*tamim*), *blamelessly*—Abraham…** ***tamim*** Abraham is enjoined to be *tamim* in Genesis 17:1, as God commands him to keep the covenant of circumcision: *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, YHVH appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am El Shaddai. Walk in My presence and be tamim, perfect"* (Genesis 17:1). See *Midrash Tehillim* 15:6; *Zohar* 1:95a–b.

643. ***And does what is righteous*—Isaac** See *Midrash Tehillim*, ibid.: "*And does* צדק (*tsedeq*), *what is righteous*—Isaac, who acted righteously, offering himself to be bound on the altar." In Kabbalah, Isaac symbolizes *Gevurah*, who stimulates and activates *Shekhinah*, known as *Tsedeq*, "Righteousness."

644. ***And speaks the truth*—Jacob** See ibid.: "*And speaks the truth*—Jacob, as is said: *You give truth to Jacob* (Micah 7:20)." Truth symbolizes Jacob's *sefirah, Tif'eret*.

645. **why did he act this way with Laban?** Jacob used stratagems to increase the number of dark-colored sheep and white-spotted goats. For example, he peeled fresh shoots of wood, exposing the white tissue beneath,

and then placed them in the water troughs, near where the animals mated. Jacob figured that if the mating animals were subjected to the sight of this white tissue, the color of their offspring would be affected. See Genesis 30:32–43.

This interpretation rests on folkloristic beliefs and assumes the inheritability of acquired characteristics. See Jehuda Feliks, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 4:1024–26; Speiser, *Genesis*, 234–39; Sarna, *Genesis*, 212.

For justification of Jacob's questionable behavior here and elsewhere, see *Sekhel Tov*, Genesis 31:10; *Zohar* 138a–b, 160a; Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 46–49, 55–57, 64–67.

646. **Jacob was examining the hour of his zodiacal constellation** If his attempt proved successful, this would signify astrological confirmation that the time was propitious for him to set out on his journey. "Zodiacal constellation" renders מזלא (*mazzala*), "constellation, planet, planetary influence, destiny, guardian angel." See above, note 557.

According to the *Zohar*, stars influence the world but are themselves messengers of God. See *Zohar* 2:171b; 232a; 3:216b (*RM*), 251a–b (*RM*); 281b (*RM*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:653–54.

647. ***Let my honesty testify for me on a future day*** The verse continues: *when you come to check on my wages. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any hmb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen*.

648. **rather, in total honesty and perfect intention** In exchange for all his labor.

649. **obtained Laban's permission** Laban agreed that Jacob could keep any dark-colored sheep or white-spotted goats. See Genesis 30:34: *Laban said, "Good! Let it be according to your word."*

650. **How many types of sorcery Laban employed…** On Laban's sorcery, see *Targum Yerushalmi*, Rashi, Ibn

Ezra, and *Sekhel Tov* on Genesis 30:27; *Zohar* 1:133b, 139b, 158b, 164b, 166b–167b.

651. **blessing from above is never less than a thousand…** Based on the sefirotic decade.

652. **he found only ten of every species** Since Laban had appropriated all the rest.

653. **by taking those rods and placing them facing the flock** See above, note 645.

654. **whatever they bear of that pattern will be your wages** Only the dark-colored sheep and the white-spotted goats.

655. ***ten*** **מונים (*monim*), *times*—ten מן (*min*), of, this…** Rabbi Abba's play on words apparently also includes מין (*min*) and מינים (*minim*), "species."

656. **until the blessed Holy One… wresting forcefully what was his** On the divine role in this episode, see Genesis 31:10–12; *Sekhel Tov*, Genesis 31:10; and *Bereshit Rabbah* 73:10: "Rabbi Ḥunya said, 'The ministering angels carried off some of Laban's sheep and brought them over to Jacob's flocks.'"

657. **some depend on action… speech … aspiration of the heart** There are various ways to draw down the flow of blessing from the upper worlds: through holy action, verbal prayer, and genuine intention. See *Zohar* 1:99b, 220b; 2:239b; 3:184a, 285a.

658. **by prayer—with speech and aspiration** Words of prayer must be recited with pure intention.

659. **if not by prayer, they depend on action** Certain supernal processes depend on action, as here, with Jacob.

660. **Perfect Jacob** This title derives from a description of Jacob in *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 25:27. In the biblical verse Jacob—in contrast to Esau the hunter—is described as תם (*tam*), "simple, innocent, plain, mild, quiet, sound, wholesome." The *Targum* employs the Aramaic word שלים (*shelim*), "complete, perfect."

661. ***He placed the rods …in the watering troughs*** The verse continues: *where the flock came to drink, facing the flock. Now, they were in heat when they came to drink*.

662. **from the bubbling spring of all to all those supernal rungs…** From the upper sefirotic source to all six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, whose core is *Tif'eret*, Jacob's share.

663. ***rods*… Rungs, courts of justice** *Gevurah, Hod*, and *Shekhinah* (or forces beneath Her), through whom divine judgment is administered. These serve as rods of punishment.

664. **stripping them of Judgment** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who removes the harshness of Judgment with the sweetness of *Ḥesed*.

665. ברהטים **(*Ba-rehatim*)…** ***A king is bound*** ברהטים **(*ba-rehatim*)…** The *king* is *Binah*, source of blessing, who is *bound* or contained in the *rehatim, channels* (or "cavities") of the divine brain. Rabbi El'azar understands *ba-rehatim* (in the verse from Genesis) as *with the channels*, since the preposition ב (*be*) can mean "with" as well as "in." Jacob was able to strip the rods of their harshness *with* the flow of emanation from above.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 31:4; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 7:6; *Tanḥuma, Tetsavveh* 6; *Zohar* 1:14a, 162a (*ST*), 163a; 3:140a (*IR*), 269b; *ZḤ* 111d (*Tiq*); *TZ* 6, 21b; *TZ* (2) 6, 144b.

On רהיטי מוחא (*rehitei moḥa*), "channels [or: cavities] of the brain," see the last two citations (from *TZ*) and *Zohar* 3:136a (*IR*), 293a–b (*IZ*). For various interpretations of the *rehatim* in this paragraph and the next, see *OY, KP*, Galante, *MM, Sullam, MmD*.

666. **this *king is bound*… from the supernal king** *Tif'eret is bound* and contained in the *rehatim, channels*, of *Binah*, the supernal king.

667. ***In the watering troughs*—whence all is watered** *With the watering troughs*, the *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*.

668. **site where they gather** *Shekhinah*.

669. ***Where the flock came to drink*** The full verse reads: *He placed the rods that he had peeled in the channels, in the watering troughs, where the flock came to drink, facing the flock. Now they were in heat when they came to drink*.

670. ***watering all beasts of the field…*** The *beasts of the field* and the *flocks* symbolize camps of angels nourished by *Shekhinah*, who is pictured as a field. See *Zohar* 1:151b–152a (*ST*), 152a.

671. ***They were in heat*** The verse continues: *when they came to drink*.

672. **When the north wind blows, waters congeal…** *Gevurah*, or *Din* ("Judgment"), symbolized by the north, freezes the flow of emanation. See *Zohar* 1:29b, 152a; 2:30a; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 341.

673. **When the south wind arouses, waters warm…** The warmth of *Ḥesed*, symbolized by the south, thaws the frozen waters.

674. ויחמנה **(*Va-yeḥamnah*)? But look at what is written:** ויחמו **(*Va-yeḥemu*)!** The two consecutive verbs are in different genders: first feminine, then masculine. How can this be explained?

675. **However, they are all female** Since all the forces beneath *Shekhinah* receive from Her, they are depicted as feminine.

676. ***Jacob took rods…*** The full verse reads: *Jacob took rods of fresh poplar, almond, and plane, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white of the rods*.

677. ***For Jacob, chose for himself Yah, Israel as his own treasure*** The translation is intentionally vague; see below.

678. **So far, we don't know who chose whom…** The verse can be rendered: *For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel as His own treasure*, or: *For Jacob has*

chosen Yah for himself, Israel [has chosen Yah] *as his own treasure*. See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 312.

679. **Jacob selected his allotted portion as his share** Even though the verse from Deuteronomy apparently removes the ambiguity of the verse from Psalms and determines its meaning, Rabbi El'azar shows that the alternative sense is also true: *For Jacob has chosen Yah for himself*, choosing his divine share.

680. **ascending above all rungs** The two letters of the divine name יה (*Yah*) signify *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*, issuing from *Keter* at the top of the sefirotic ladder.

681. ***rods of fresh* לבנה (*livneh*), *poplar*** For the full verse, see above, note 676.

682. **white rung of the right side** *Ḥesed*. On this and the following lines, see *Zohar* 1:162a (*ST*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 55–57, 64–67.

683. **red rung of the left side** *Gevurah*.

684. ***He peeled white stripes in them*, stripping it of Judgment...** Jacob removed the harshness of *Gevurah* with the sweetness of *Ḥesed*. See above, page 402.

685. **entered between them... one in two colors** Jacob embodies *Tif'eret*, who blends the qualities of *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*.

686. **so that white would be revealed over red** So that the quality of *Ḥesed* would predominate.

687. **to his allotted rung from the bubbling spring of all...** To *Tif'eret* from the upper sefirotic source.

The phrase "three as one," referring here to the triadic nature of *Tif'eret*, may derive from a legal term referring to a triad of judges. See BT *Ketubbot* 22a; *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *be-motev telata ka-ḥada;* Asher ben Yeḥiel, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:22b (*TZ*).

688. **by this act of wisdom** By Jacob's action with the rods.

689. **while blessings settle upon him** Upon *Tif'eret*.

690. ***In the morning… at evening…*** From Jacob's deathbed blessing to Benjamin. *Morning* and *evening* symbolize *Ḥesed* and *Shekhinah. Tif'eret* draws blessing from *Ḥesed* and conveys it to *Shekhinah*, who then distributes it to the lower worlds. See Proverbs 31:15, often applied to *Shekhinah*, and *Zohar* 1:247b–248a.

The word ולערב (*ve-la-erev*) is apparently understood as *to evening*, since the preposition ל (*le*) means "to" as well as "at."

691. **Rabbi Yeisa the Younger** On his youthfulness, see *Zohar* 2:79b, 153a.

692. ***Head of the righteous one*** **is Holy Corona…** *Shekhinah* is identified as עטרה (*Atarah*), "Crown, Corona" (*Zohar* 1:29b, 74a; 2:100b). Here this name of *Shekhinah* alludes to the corona of the divine phallus, *Yesod* (Righteous One). In the ritual of circumcision, first the foreskin is removed, disclosing the mucous membrane, which is then torn down the center and pulled back, revealing the corona. The removal of the foreskin symbolizes *Yesod*, while uncovering the corona symbolizes *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:13a, 32a (*Tos*), 91b, 96b, 98b (*ST*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 133. Cf. *Zohar* 2:40a, 125b; 3:91b, 95b. On *Shekhinah* as corona of the phallus, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 274–75, n. 14; 357–68; idem, "Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah"; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 85–92. On *Yesod* as Righteous One, see above, note 485. See also above, p. 242, n. 305.

693. **Jacob, who receives blessings and channels them…** Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who receives the flow of blessing from above and conveys it to *Yesod* (Righteous One), the divine phallus who disseminates blessed seed.

694. **site of head of Covenant, from which bubbling springs gush** The head of the divine phallus.

695. **Orifice of a flask…** נוקבא דקיסטא (*Nuqba de-qista*). *Nuqba*, "Hole," also means "female," which appears in the next line. "Flask" renders *qista*, which derives from the Greek *xestes*, a measure about the size of a pint. The *Arukh* (s.v. *qst*) understands it as a flask or jug. See *Zohar* 1:33a, 83a, 121b, 164a.

696. **Similarly, *head of the righteous one*…** As wine pours from the opening of a measured vessel, so holy seed is ejaculated from the opening of the divine phallus into *Shekhinah*. See BT *Ḥagigah* 15a: "Shemu'el said, 'Any emission of semen that does not shoot forth like an arrow does not fructify.'"

697. **guarding the sign of the holy covenant … Righteous…** By avoiding illicit sexual behavior, the male preserves the sanctity of his phallus—site of the covenant of circumcision—and thereby attains *Yesod*'s title: Righteous.

Rabbi Shim'on's idiom reflects the promiscuity prevalent in the Jewish community in thirteenth-century Castile. See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 51–54 (63–67); Baer, in *Zion* 2 (1937): 31–33, 36–44; idem, *History*, 1:250–63; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1371–72; Assis, "Sexual Behavior in Mediaeval Hispano-Jewish Society."

698. ***I have been* נער (*na'ar*), *young*… uttered by the Prince of the World** By Metatron, the chief angel, also known as נער (*na'ar*), "Youth, Lad (heavenly servant)." See BT *Yevamot* 16b: "Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥmani said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, 'This verse was uttered by the Prince of the World: *I have been young and now I am old*. Who said it? If you suggest it was the blessed Holy One, does old age pertain to Him? So David must have said it. But was he so old? Rather, you must conclude that the Prince of the World uttered it.'"

See above, page 297; *ZḤ* 85c (*MhN, Rut*). On Metatron, see *Tosafot, Yevamot* 16b, s.v. *pasuq zeh;* Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 377–81; Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 73–108.

699. **imbued with more wisdom than people imagine** Some people, pointing to the righteous who suffer, doubt the truth of this verse.

700. ***I have been na'ar, young, and now I am old*. So it is!** When the divine couple unites, Metatron is rejuvenated by their flow; when this union is interrupted, he wanes.

701. **in praise of this union, in which day is never lacking night…** Metatron is extolling the union of divine male and female, symbolized by day and night.

702. **Righteous One is linked above, linked below** *Yesod* constitutes the link between *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

703. **does not woo the female…** *Yesod* does not need to seek out *Shekhinah*, who accompanies Him constantly. For *bread* as a female symbol, see Genesis 39:6, 9; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 39:6; *Bereshit Rabbah* 70:4; 86:6; *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 11; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:32. Cf. Proverbs 30:20.

704. **But during exile, not so!** When Israel languishes in exile and the Temple is destroyed, union above is interrupted.

705. **It is written: *his seed*, not *him*…** The verse reads: *I have never seen… his seed begging bread*, not: *him begging bread*. The subject is not *Yesod* but His seed. When the people of Israel dwell in their own land, the divine couple is united intimately and seed issues, with no need of wooing the female. In time of exile, the couple is separated and no seed issues. In either case, *I have never seen … his seed begging bread*.

706. ***I have never seen a righteous man forsaken*—what about during exile?** Here the subject is *Yesod* Himself, not *his seed*. Isn't He *forsaken* when the union is ruptured by exile?

707. **linked above, never *forsaken*!** Even if *Yesod* is no longer joined with *Shekhinah*, His connection is maintained above with *Tif'eret*.

708. **At other times He is not *forsaken* by female…** When there is no exile, *Yesod* is linked above and below, to *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

709. ***God placed them in the expanse of heaven*** The verse concludes: *to shine upon earth*. The context is the creation of the sun, moon, and stars.

710. **Righteous One** *The expanse of heaven* is *Yesod*.

711. **Although it is said: *in the expanse of heaven*, precisely…** One might assume that *expanse of heaven* designates *Tif'eret*, known as *heaven*, but a more precise reading points to *Yesod*, the extension of *Tif'eret*. While *Tif'eret* constitutes the torso of the male sefirotic body, *Yesod*, the divine phallus, is the body's consummation.

See *Zohar* 1:20a, 34a, 168b; *ZḤ* 14a (*MhN*).

712. **Eighth expanse… from below to above…** *Binah*, eighth *sefirah* counting up from *Shekhinah*. She conceives and births all the lower *sefirot*, pictured here as stars.

713. **Similarly, eighth expanse from above to below…** *Yesod*, eighth *sefirah* counting down from *Ḥokhmah*. He absorbs all the sefirotic lights generated by *Binah*. See *Bahir* 105 (157).

714. **forming a flowing river whose waters never cease** Together, *Binah* and *Yesod* constitute the river of emanation.

715. ***To shine upon earth*** Upon *Shekhinah*, symbolized by *earth*.

716. **Although already explained, all shares a single pattern** Although the verse has already been interpreted along similar lines, Rabbi Shim'on here emphasizes the shared pattern of *Binah* and *Yesod*. See *Zohar* 1:20a, 34a; *ZḤ* 14a (*MhN*).

717. **One sustains and nourishes the higher world, including itself…** *Binah* nourishes the higher world, including Herself, along with the *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*.

The phrase "including itself" renders דאיהו ביה (*de-ihu beih*), literally, "in which it is" or "which is in it." The second

alternative would refer to the configuration of *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*, originating within *Binah*.

718. **lower world along with all those lower aspects** *Shekhinah* along with the realms and angelic powers beneath Her.

719. **Now, you might ask 'Who is the higher world? After all…** Since *Binah* Her self is the higher world, how can one say that She nourishes the higher world?

720. **all those issuing from it are named after it** The *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod* share in the name "higher world."

721. **Who is *Lebanon?* This has already been established…** *Lebanon* symbolizes *Ḥokhmah*, while its cedars are the six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, which began as saplings in the higher sefirotic realm and were later transplanted into *Shekhinah*.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 15:1: "*YHVH Elohim planted a garden in Eden* (Genesis 2:8).... As is written: *The trees of YHVH are sated, the cedars of Lebanon that He planted*. Rabbi Ḥanina said, 'They resembled antennae of grasshoppers, and the blessed Holy One uprooted them, transplanting them in the Garden of Eden.'"

See Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 504; *Zohar* 1:31a, 35a; 3:217b.

722. **These are two birds we have discussed … issuing from Lebanon…** The two birds are *Binah* and *Shekhinah*, who emanate from *Ḥokhmah*, generating other divine or angelic powers and birdlike souls.

On the angelic birds of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:172a, 217b, 234a (*Tos*); 2:179a (*SdTs*). On birdlike souls, see BT *Sanhedrin* 91a; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, add. *2*, 7:3; *Zohar* 3:196b, 217b; *ZḤ* 13c (*MhN*).

723. **Mystery of the word: *Now Laban had two daughters…*** Here לבן (*Lavan*), like לבנון (*Levanon*), symbolizes *Ḥokhmah*, while his two daughters symbolize *Binah* and *Shekhinah*.

724. ***The stork…* as is written: *the name of the elder was Leah*** *The stork* symbolizes *Binah*, identified with Laban's elder daughter.

725. **those six supernal sons, six directions of the world…** The six *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, engendered by *Binah*. The term "six directions" (above, below, north, south, east, and west) derives from *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:13.

726. **Because this is the higher world—though called female** Although She is often depicted as Divine Mother, *Binah* is also "World of the Male," encompassing the entire configuration of *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*, who constitute a masculine entity ready to join *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:96a, 147a, 149a, 160b, 246a–247a, 248b; 2:127b; *ZḤ* 72b (*ShS*). Cf. 1:17b, 46b; 2:4a.

727. **for when it expands…*ḥasidah*, חסד (*Ḥesed*)… primordial light…** The masculine aspect of *Binah* emanates radiant goodness, exemplified by *Ḥesed*, first of the lower *sefirot*, which is here linked with *Binah's* name: *ḥasidah, stork*. *Ḥesed* is also identified with the primordial light of Creation, spoken into being by *Binah* (*Elohim*). See *Zohar* 1:16b.

728. **Do not read ברושים (*beroshim*)…but rather בראשים (*be-rashim*)…** *Binah's* home is in the six supernal *sefirot* emanating from Her, who are known as *heads*.

729. **other world *has her home* in lower realms… Court of Justice…** *Shekhinah* settles in the heavenly realms beneath Her. She derives from the *sefirah* of *Din* ("Judgment") and pronounces the divine decree.

730. **Sometimes She is called as above, by all those names** As *Shekhinah* conveys the qualities of the various *sefirot*, She adopts their names.

731. **Of this site is written: *YHVH* *was sorry…*** The verse in Genesis reads: *YHVH was sorry that He had made humankind on earth, and His heart was saddened.* *Shekhinah* is pained by human sin and rages with holy wrath. See *Zohar* 1:57a.

732. **For everything above is entirely radiant, vitality in all directions** The realm above *Shekhinah* is characterized by the radiance of *Ḥesed*.

733. **‘There is no sadness before the Omnipresent’—‘before,’ precisely!** See BT *Ḥagigah* 5b: *“If you will not listen, My soul will weep in secret because of the arrogance* (Jeremiah 13:17)…. But is there weeping before [i.e., on the part of] the blessed Holy One? Look, Rabbi Papa has said: ‘There is no sadness before the blessed Holy One, as is said: *Splendor and majesty are before Him, power and joy in His place.’* There is no contradiction: this refers to the inner chambers; that refers to the outer chambers.”

The last sentence is usually taken to mean: “This [the weeping] refers to the inner chambers; that [the joy] refers to the outer chambers.” However, Ḥanan’el ben Ḥushi’el (ad loc.) adopts the reverse interpretation: “This [the joy] refers to the inner chambers; that [the weeping] refers to the outer chambers,” which accords with Rabbi Shim’on’s view here: There is no sadness in the inner, upper realms, “before,” preceding *Shekhinah*, Divine Presence, the Omnipresent.

See *KP; Zohar* 1:57a, 2:17b–18a; 3:15b; Margaliot, *Sha’arei Zohar, Ḥagigah* 5b.

734. ***with joy*… the higher world… *with singing*… the lower world** Pure *joy* befits only the higher world, where “there is no sadness,” not the lower world of *Shekhinah*.

735. ***He placed the rods that he had peeled in the channels…*** The verse continues: *in the watering troughs, where the flock came to drink, facing the flock. Now they were in heat when they came to drink*. See above, pages 401–4.

736. **Woe to the wicked…who neither know nor consider…Torah!…** This attack conveys a critique of

thirteenth-century radical rationalists who read the Torah critically and challenged its divine origin and authority.

See *Zohar* 2:264b; 3:149a–b, 152a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 391–92; idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 55–56; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 203; Baer, *History*, 1:236–305; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1082.

737. **all words of Torah are entirely precious** Even seemingly strange passages such as the one about Jacob and the rods.

This theme recurs frequently in the *Zohar*. See 1:145b; 2:55b, 98b–99b 3:79b, 149a, 152a, 174b, 202a, 265a; *ZḤ* 6d (*MhN*). Cf. *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 336; *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 32:47.

738. ***She is more precious than rubies; nothing desired can compare…*** Rabbi El'azar blends two verses describing wisdom, here identified with Torah: *She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her* (Proverbs 3:15); and: *For wisdom is better than rubies; nothing desired can compare with her* (ibid. 8:11).

739. **humiliation of Torah** Neglecting and denigrating her. See M *Avot* 6:2: "Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi said, 'Every single day an echo resounds from Mount Horeb [Sinai], proclaiming: "Woe to creatures for the humiliation of Torah!" For whoever does not engage in Torah is called "rebuked."'"

740. ***It is not an empty word* מכם (*mi-kem*), *for you*… because of you!** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:14, in the name of Rabbi Yish ma'el: "*It is not an empty word* מכם (*mi-kem*), *for you;* and if it is empty, it is *mi-kem*, from you—because of you, because you do not know how to interpret." See *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 32:47; JT *Pe'ah* 1:1, 15b.

741. **this is his own benefit, since to Torah herself…** Any new discovery one finds in Torah was hidden there all along; nothing can be added to her.

See Deuteronomy 4:2; and *Vayiqra Rabbah* 22:1: "Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi said, '… Scripture, Mishnah,

Talmud, *Tosefta*, homiletical expositions, and even what a devoted disciple will some day say in the presence of his teacher—all of these were uttered to Moses at Sinai.'"

742. **When supernal letters all combine on this rung…** When the letters of the alphabet emanating from *Binah*, the higher world, combine on the rung of *Shekhinah*, who is known as את (*Et*), spanning א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*).

743. **to water all those flocks… with judgment and compassion** *Shekhinah* dispenses the flow of emanation to all the angels beneath Her, so that they can transmit blessing and execute judgment throughout the world.

744. **Jacob sought to inaugurate evening prayer…** According to rabbinic tradition, the patriarchs instituted daily prayer. See BT *Berakhot* 26b: "Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Ḥanina said, 'The patriarchs instituted the prayers.'… Abraham instituted the morning prayer;… Isaac, the afternoon prayer;… Jacob, the evening prayer." See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9.

Here "evening prayer" symbolizes *Shekhinah*, identified with the night and the moon. Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, the sun, who illumines *Shekhinah* and conveys to Her the multifaceted sefirotic blessing.

745. ***rods*—severe judgments issuing from supernal *Gevurah*** Tools of punishment issuing from *Gevurah*, which is known as *Din* ("Judgment"). See above, pages 402–4.

746. **to mend this rung** To purge *Shekhinah* of judgment.

747. **those four *channels* found beneath this well…** Four camps of angels situated beneath the well of *Shekhinah*, which is filled by the sefirotic stream.

748. **so they are called *channels*** The biblical word רהט (*rehat*), *channel*, is a cognate of the Aramaic רהט (*rht*), "to run, flow."

749. **There all come to drink…** All the lower angelic powers drink from the four camps, imbibing judgment and

enacting it in the world.

750. ***Where the flock came to drink, facing the flock*** The verse reads: *He placed the rods that he had peeled in the channels, in the watering troughs, where the flock came to drink, facing the flock*.

751. ***Where the flock…facing the flock*, facing one another** In the verse, *facing the flock* refers to the rods facing the flock. Rabbi El'azar, responding to the repetition of the word *flock*, imagines various flocks of angels facing one another.

752. ***Now they were in heat*** The verse concludes: *when they came to drink*.

753. **When they are crowned with judgment…** When the angels are arrayed in judgment, poised to administer it throughout the world.

754. ***watchers…holy ones*** Angels.

755. ***My soul cleaves to You*—so that his rung would be crowned above** David's rung is *Shekhinah*, also known as *soul*. He prayed that She be adorned above, uniting with *Tif'eret*.

756. **right hand grasps it, raising it…** The divine right hand, *Ḥesed*, grasps *Shekhinah* and draws Her to *Tif'eret*.

757. ***His left hand beneath my head, his right hand embracing me*** *Shekhinah* is held by the divine hands, *Gevurah* and *Ḥesed*, who are extensions of *Tif'eret*, the blessed Holy One.

758. **all those channels…all those flocks…** The four main camps of angels and the numerous flocks of angels beneath them. See above, pages 411–12.

759. **right side** The side of holiness.

760. **other side…** The demonic realm and its powers, symbolized by Laban and his flock.

761. ***For you are a people holy to YHVH your God…*** The verse continues: *It is you YHVH has chosen to be His treasured people out of all the peoples on the face of the earth*.

762. **Jacob is Glory of the Patriarchs, totality of them all** See *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:1: “Rabbi Pinḥas said in the name of Rabbi Re’uven, ‘… The chosen of the patriarchs is Jacob, as is said: *For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself* (Psalms 135:4).’” Cf. BT *Pesaḥim* 56a.

Jacob symbolizes *Tif’eret*, who harmonizes and completes the polar opposites, *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, symbolized by Abraham and Isaac. See *Zohar* 1:119b, 133a, 144b, 149b, 150a, 152a (*ST*), 171b, 172b, 173b, 180a, 207a; 2:23a.

763. **to illumine the moon, to inaugurate evening prayer** See above, page 411.

764. **arraying adornments for faith** For *Shekhinah*, culmination of the mystical realm of faith, arrayed by camps of angels.

765. ***It is you YHVH has chosen to be His treasured people…*** The verse continues: *out of all the peoples on the face of the earth*.

766. ***He has withdrawn His right…Deliver Your right…*** In these biblical verses, *right* refers to God’s right hand: the Temple was destroyed when God withdrew the protective power of *His right hand*, and the Psalmist pleads: *Deliver (with) Your right hand!* Rabbi Abba may be applying the word *right* also to Israel, who dwells on that side. God *has withdrawn* (exiled) *His right* (Israel) *in the face of the enemy* (who embody the demonic left). Consequently, the Psalmist pleads: *Deliver Your right!*

767. **Nothing will remain… except the blessed Holy One… and Israel…** This extremely chauvinistic formulation should be understood in the context of the sole possession of theological truth claimed by medieval religions, and against the background of medieval Jewry’s suffering and degradation. Moses Cordovero maintains that other nations will be purified and integrated into Israel. See *OY*, citing Zephaniah 3:9. Cf. Isaiah 55:5; 56:7–8; 60:3.

768. **Look, *Shekhinah* is with us! Let us engage in Her words!…** *Shekhinah* accompanies those who pray before

setting out on the road. See BT *Berakhot* 29b–30a; *Zohar* 1:49b–50a, 230a–b.

"Her words" are words of Torah, which guarantee Her presence. See M *Avot* 3:6: "Rabbi Ḥalafta of the village of Ḥananya says, 'If ten are sitting engaged in Torah, *Shekhinah* dwells among them…even five…even three…even two… even one.'"

On the importance of engaging in Torah while on a journey, see Deuteronomy 6:7; BT *Eruvin* 54a; *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 69b–70a, 76a, 87a, 115b, 157a; and the extreme formulation in BT *Ta'anit* 10b: "Rabbi Il'ai son of Berekhiah said, 'Two disciples of the wise who are walking on the way and are not engaged in words of Torah deserve to be burned.'"

769. **Righteous One above** *Yesod*, who is known as Righteous One, based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse, which literally means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, is understood as *The righteous one* is *the foundation of the world*.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

770. **righteous one below** The righteous human being.

771. ***Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of* איש חי (*ish ḥai*), *a living man*** Benayahu was a loyal follower of King David who attains mythic status in the *Zohar*. See BT *Berakhot* 18a–b: "Rabbi Ḥiyya said…, 'The righteous are called "living" even in their death, as is said: *Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of a living man*…. Do you mean to say that all other people are sons of dead men? Rather, *son of a living man*, for even in his death he was called *living*.'"

See Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Tsedeq*, 7a; *Zohar* 1:6a, 132a, 136a.

772. **Because he is righteous, for Righteous One…** The righteous human emulates *Yesod* and attains His title, *Ḥai*.

On various senses of the title חי העולמים (*Ḥei ha-Olamim*), "Life of the Worlds," see Daniel 12:7; *Mekhilta, Pisḥa* 16; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:5; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §275; *Zohar* 1:4b, 132a, 135b, 167b.

773. **All is one—*Ḥai* and *Blessed*—inseparable...** *Yesod*, known as *Ḥai*, joins *Shekhinah*, known as *Blessed*.

The expression "well of living waters" appears in Genesis 26:19; Song of Songs 4:15. In the *Zohar* it refers to *Shekhinah*, filled with the vivifying waters of *Yesod*.

774. **supernal world, high and exalted...** *Binah*, source of the flow of emanation.

775. **From there it is blessed, illumining all those below** From *Binah*, *Shekhinah* is blessed, and then She conveys blessing below.

776. **When all is filled fittingly, *Exalted be the God of my salvation!*** *Binah* Herself is *exalted* by the process.

777. ***His eye*** עינו (*Eino*). The Masoretic text reads עיניו (*einav*), *His eyes*, while the manuscripts and early editions of the *Zohar* are divided between the singular and the plural. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 71:5; Theodor, ad loc.; *Minḥat Shai* on Job 36:7.

778. ***The eyes of YHVH are upon the righteous*** The plural, צדיקים (*tsaddiqim*), *the righteous*, may refer to both the human righteous and *Yesod*. See *Zohar* 2:60b, 202a, 225a–b.

779. **reigning kings linked to the throne** The angels transporting the divine throne, which symbolizes *Shekhinah*. The angels "reign" in the sense that they conduct the affairs of the world.

780. **To rule the world, so that the throne is established upon its supports** The reign of the angels exalts them and thereby firmly establishes the divine throne, which they support.

781. **to unite with its site fittingly** So the divine throne, *Shekhinah*, can join with *Tif'eret*.

782. **This man is certainly a Jew** See *Zohar* 1:63b: "As they were walking, they saw a Jew approaching. Rabbi Yose said, 'This person is a Jew—he looks so!'"

783. **to enable people to attain merit!** By giving them an opportunity to perform a *mitsvah*—here the *mitsvah* of charity, which benefits not only the recipient but the donor too. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 34:1, 5, 8; and BT *Bava Batra* loa, which cites Proverbs 10:2.

784. **pint** קיסטא (*Qista*), which derives from the Greek *xestes*, a measure about the size of a pint. The *Arukh* (s.v. *qst*) understands it as a flask or jug. See *Zohar* 1:33a, 83a, 121b, 162a.

785. **spiced brew for sipping on the way** דאורחא טירמא בקירטוי (*Tirma be-qirtoi de-orḥa*). *Tirma* derives from the Greek *trimma*, "a brew prepared of pounded groats and spices." See BT *Berakhot* 38a, where four varieties of *trimma* are described: sesame, grape-kernel, date, and קורטמי (*qurtemei*), "safflower." *Qurtemei* assonates with *qirtoi* here, but the latter apparently derives from the root קרט (*qrt*), "to take a bite, nibble," as in the phrase למקרטא באורחא (*le-miqreta beorḥa*), "to take a bite on the way." See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 22:4; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 5:8; *Tanḥuma, Ḥuqqat* 1.

On *tirma*, see *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178; *KP*. For other interpretations of *qirtoi de-orḥa*, see *OY;* Galante; *KP; NZ;* Liebes, *Peraqim*, 392.

786. **So people may attain merit through me** "I am traveling without any provisions so that people may attain merit by providing me with food."

787. **two sons who were taken captive when an officer came to town** In medieval Europe, Jews were at times taken captive due to a blood libel, Host desecration libel, or simply for extortion. Ransoming such captives was considered a supreme religious duty.

788. **benefit through me** That is, "attain merit by providing me with funds for my sons' release."

789. **They benefited along with him and gave him something to eat** By helping him, they benefited as well.

790. **Daily offering of the blessed Holy One—to nourish the world…** The Jew emphasizes the cosmic function of the daily sacrifices in the Temple. This mystical view—typical of the *Zohar*—contrasts with that of Maimonides, who relativized the importance of the sacrifices, trying to explain them away as a concession to the primitive nature of ancient Israel.

See Rashi on BT *Ketubbot* 10b, s.v. *mezin;* Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:32; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:878–90.

791. **through arousal below, arousal above…** A general principle of Kabbalah. Here the Jew's point is that the daily sacrifices in the Temple stimulate the flow of emanation above, nourishing all worlds.

See *Zohar* 1:35a, 77b, 82b, 86b, 88a, 156b, 235a, 244a; 2:31b, 265a; 3:40b, 92a, 110b.

792. ***I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey…*** Alluding to the midrashic reading of this verse, according to which God is describing His consumption of sacrifices and libations. See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*, ad loc.; *Zohar* 3:3b–4a, 241a–242a, 248a.

793. ***For My fire-offerings*, as is written: *Eat, O friends!…*** The verse continues in parallelism: *Drink and be drunk, O lovers!* God shares the offerings with the angels. The word אשי (*ishshai*), *My fire-offerings*, is interpreted as אישי (*ishai*), "My angelic personages." (Actually, the literal meaning of אשה [*ishsheh*] is probably "gift"; see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:161–62.)

See *Sifrei Zuta*, Numbers 28:2; *Midrash Zuta*, Song of Songs 1:15; *Zohar* 1:70a, 81a (*ST*); 2:43a; 3:110a (*RM*), 258b. On this class of angels, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:7.

Cf. *Sifra, Vayiqra, dibbura dindavah* 6:9, 7c: "אשה (*Ishsheh*), *Fire-offering:* for the sake of אישים (*ishshim*), fire-

offerings [i.e., not for the sake of charring the flesh].” See M *Zevaḥim* 4:6; BT *Zevaḥim* 46b.

794. **then if one offers nourishment to sustain a life…** Sustaining a poor person (such as this wandering Jew) has an effect similar to, or even greater than, the Temple sacrifices. See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 4; BT *Sukkah* 49b.

795. **one should never disparage anyone else in the world** See M *Avot* 4:3: “Ben Azzai said, ‘Do not despise any human being.’”

796. **In two ways we have benefited from this person!** By helping him and by learning from him this secret of Torah.

797. **He opened** The Jew opened.

798. **mystery of Assembly of Israel…את (*et*)—precisely, *Et!*** *Shekhinah* is known as Assembly of Israel. See above, note 15.

Grammatically, the accusative particle את (*et*) has no ascertainable independent sense, but Naḥum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that when et appears in a biblical verse, it amplifies the original meaning. See BT *Pesaḥim* 22b; *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:90a, 135b.

In the *Zohar* the word את (*et*) symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who comprises the entire alphabet of divine speech, from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*). See the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: “I am *alpha* and *omega*.”

799. ***Qorbani, My offering*—קרבנא (*qorbena*), bringing near…** The word קרבן (*qorbari*), *offering*, means literally: “bringing near.” Its kabbalistic purpose is to bring *Shekhinah* near, to unite Her with *Tif’eret*. See *Bahir* 77–78 (108–9).

800. ***My food*—nourishment coming from above through arousal below** The sustaining flow of emanation issuing from *Binah*, stimulated by the sacrificial offering below.

801. ***For My fire-offerings*—including other forces who must be nourished…** Angels. See above, note 793.

802. **aspiration and connection…** The pure intention of those participating in the ritual (priests, Levites, and Israelites), which serves to unify all realms below and above. See *Targum Onqelos*, Numbers 28:2.

803. **When Abraham roused himself to perform His will…** To offer up Isaac as God commanded. These two patriarchs symbolize *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, associated with morning and evening, the *appointed* times for the two daily offerings. See Numbers 28:4. Cf. BT *Berakhot* 26b.

804. **And Rabbi Ḥiyya said** The Jew reports how Rabbi Ḥiyya responded to Rabbi El'azar.

805. **the phrase… should read: *at their appointed times*!** Referring to the two *times* of the patriarchs and their corresponding daily offerings: morning and evening.

806. **He replied** The Jew relates Rabbi El'azar's reply to Rabbi Ḥiyya's challenge.

807. **fire merged with water, water with fire…** Abraham's act of binding Isaac on the altar merged their corresponding *sefirot: Ḥesed* (symbolized by water) and *Gevurah* (symbolized by fire). Similarly, the daily offering harmonizes these opposite tendencies. This unified harmony is indicated by the singular construction: *at its appointed time*.

See *Zohar* 1:103b–104a, 118b, 133b, and especially 119b.

808. **mystery of שמור (*Shamor*), *Observe*** *Shekhinah,* the feminine aspect, is signified by the opening word of the fourth of the Ten Commandments: שמור (*Shamor*), *Observe, the Sabbath day to keep it holy* (Deuteronomy 5:12). This word signifies the feminine because the other version of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8) reads: זכור (*Zakhor*), *Remember, the Sabbath day…*, and זכור (*zakhor*) suggests זכר (*zakhar*), "male."

See BT *Berakhot* 20b; *Bahir* 124 (182); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 496–97; Naḥmanides on Exodus

20:8; *Zohar* 1:5b, 47b, 48b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 118.

809. **who must be drawn above… by right and left…** The purpose of the daily offering is for *Shekhinah* to be embraced and drawn above by *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, the two divine arms, symbolized by the two patriarchs and by their corresponding *appointed* times: morning and evening.

810. **If I came here just to hear these words, I am satisfied!** Similar exclamations appear in rabbinic literature and often in the *Zohar*. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 6:2; *Qohelet Zuta* 5:17; BT *Berakhot* 16a, 24b; *Shabbat* 41a; *Zohar* 1:2a, 148b, 240a; 2:99a, 121b, 122a, 193b; 3:26a; *KP*, 1:20d.

811. **Happy are Israel… *Your people are all righteous!*** Even wandering beggars. The verse, appearing frequently in the *Zohar*, reads in full: *Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever—sprout of My planting, work of My hands, that I may be glorified*. In M *Sanhedrin* 10:1, it is cited to demonstrate that "all of Israel have a share in the world that is coming."

812. **Out of disgrace… 'place of תורף (*toref*), pudenda'** According to this view, the name תרפים (*terafim*) is a contemptuous term, based on תורף (*toref*), "decay, filth, obscenity." The phrase "place of תורף (*toref*)" appears in BT *Berakhot* 24a.

See M *Avodah Zarah* 2:3; *Niddah* 8:1; *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 12; *Arukh*, s.v. *trf*. Cf. BT *Megillah* 25b.

813. **Laban was steeped in all sorceries of the world** On Laban's sorcery, see *Targum Yerushalmi*, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and *Sekhel Tov* on Genesis 30:27; *Zohar* 1:133b, 139b, 158b, 161a, 166b–167b.

814. **They were made by magic… By witchcraft** The two terms are קסם (*qesem*) and נחש (*naḥash*), linked in Numbers 23:23, where they refer to "divination" and "augury." See *Zohar* 1:167a; 3:112b, 207a, 211a, 299b.

On the process of fashioning the *terafim*, see *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 31:19; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* (ed. Friedlander), 36; *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 12; *Leqaḥ Tov*, Genesis 31:34.

815. **They were made only at precise times** At propitious moments, to attract astral powers. See Ibn Ezra on Genesis 31:19; Rashi on 2 Kings 23:24.

816. **expert in moments and hours** An astrologer who knows when the time is propitious.

817. **They speak constantly... Rachel feared they would offer advice...** According to a related interpretation, she feared they would inform Laban that Jacob had fled. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 36; *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 12; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 31:19. On the oracular power of the *terafim*, see Ezekiel 21:26; Zechariah 10:2.

818. **now what is written? *She sat on them*** The verse reads: *Rachel had taken the terafim and put them in the camel's saddle and sat on them*. According to Rabbi Yehudah, her contemptuous act prevented them from speaking. See BT *Megillah* 25b.

819. **many rituals were performed for them before they would speak** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* (ed. Friedlander), 36; *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 12.

820. **unaware that Jacob had fled...** Since Rachel had stolen the *terafim*, which could have informed him (see above, note 817). Now he was told by his servant.

821. ***An Aramean was about to destroy my father!*** The verse is usually understood to mean: *My father was a wandering* [or: *fugitive, straying, perishing*] *Aramean*. The creative reading here appears in the Passover Haggadah, and in Septuagint, *Targum Onqelos, Targum Yerushalmi*, ad loc.

822. ***It is in the power of my hand*... The witchcraft in his hand** Perhaps Rabbi Yehudah is playing on אל (*el*), *the power of*, and אל (*el*), "god," false god, referring to Laban's witchcraft.

823. **In a single day Laban covered the distance…** Jacob was already three days' distance from Laban before he fled (Genesis 30:36), so it took a messenger three days to reach Laban and inform him, meaning that now they were six days' distance apart. Laban presumably set out on the following day, and in that one day he covered a distance that would have taken Jacob seven days. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:6; Rashi on Genesis 31:23.

824. **Rachel, even though she acted to uproot her father…** According to this view, Rachel stole the *terafim* with pure intentions, seeking to eradicate her father's idolatry. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:5: "Her purpose was solely for the sake of heaven. She said, 'What, should we go and leave this old man in his corruption?'"

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 36; *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 12; Rashi on Genesis 31:19.

825. **punished; for she never raised Benjamin…** Despite her pure motives, Rachel was severely punished for the suffering her father experienced as a result of the theft: she died giving birth to Benjamin (Genesis 35:16–20). The extreme punishment demonstrates the ultimate value of honoring one's parents.

See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Mamrim* 6:11; *Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah* 240:18; *Siftei Kohen*, ad loc.; Ḥayyim Joseph David Azulai, *Devash le-Fi*, 1:39.

On Jacob's punishment for terrifying his father Isaac, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:19; 91:11; *Zohar* 1:144b, 185b. On Esau's reward for honoring Isaac, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 336; *Devarim Rabbah* 1:15; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 23; *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Ba'al ha-Turim*, Deuteronomy 2:5; above, page 318.

For another linkage between Rachel's act of theft and her death, see Genesis 31:32; *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:9; *Zohar* 1:175a.

826. **All this rebuke that Jacob delivered to Laban** See Genesis 31:36–42.

827. **That wicked one reverted to his stumbling… *god of Nahor*** Immediately after acknowledging the one God, he reverted to his belief in the idolatrous god of his grandfather Nahor.

828. ***the Fear of his father Isaac*** This striking divine name appears only twice in the Bible, both times in this chapter (see verse 42). According to *Sekhel Tov*, Exodus 15:16, it expresses the terror felt by Isaac as he was bound upon the altar.

829. **not *by the God of Abraham*** As Laban had sworn.

830. **he didn't want to trouble the Right for the sake of Laban** Jacob didn't want to call upon the divine right arm, *Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham, apparently because Laban was too wicked to deserve the abounding love of that *sefirah*. Rather, he invoked *Gevurah*, also known as *Paḥad* ("Fear"), symbolized by his father, Isaac. See *Zohar* 3:60a.

831. **one should not swear, even in truth, by the highest realm of all** *Ḥesed* is the highest of the seven *sefirot* issuing from *Binah*, while *Gevurah* is next. Further, *God of Abraham* is a more explicit divine name than *Fear of…Isaac*.

832. **leaving out my father** Isaac, who symbolizes *Gevurah*.

833. **I will complete all!…** By invoking *the Fear of Isaac* (*Gevurah*), Jacob balanced *the God of Abraham* (*Ḥesed*), thereby expressing the harmony of his own *sefirah, Tif'eret*.

834. **to be encompassed by Judgment, confronting Laban** Through swearing by *the Fear of Isaac*, Jacob invoked the power of *Gevurah*, or *Din* ("Judgment"), to secure protection against Laban.

835. ***He blessed them and named them* אדם (*Adam*), *Human*…** The verse continues: *on the day they were created*.

836. ***Come, eat of my bread!… Whoever is simple, turn in here!…*** Rabbi Abba inverts the order of these two

verses.

837. **within and without** Esoteric and exoteric.

838. **Implying that sun and moon share a single bond…** Esoterically, the phrase *male and female* implies the divine couple, *Ti'feret* and *Shekhinah*, who are symbolized by sun and moon. For Rabbi Abba, the single word בראם (*bera'am*), *He created them*, implies the union of the two, since Scripture could have employed two words: ברא אותם (*bara otam*), emphasizing two separate creations. Similarly with Habakkuk, who deletes the conjunction ו (*ve*), "and," and employs the singular forms עמד (*amad*), *stood*, and *in her lofty abode*. See *Zohar* 3:55b.

839. **Implying that Adam and Eve were created as one…** Esoterically, the phrase *male and female* implies that Adam and Eve were originally a single, androgynous creature. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1: "Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El'azar said, 'When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him androgynous, as is said: *Male and female He created them* (Genesis 1:27).' Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥman said, 'When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him with two faces. Then He sawed him and gave him two backs, one on this side and one on that.'"

See BT *Berakhot* 61a; *Eruvin* 18a; Plato, *Symposium* 189d–191d; *Zohar* 1:2b, 13b, 47a; 2:55a.

840. **blessing abides only where male and female are found** See BT *Yevamot* 62b: "Rabbi Tanḥum said in the name of Rabbi Ḥanilai, 'Any man without a wife is without joy, without blessing, without goodness.'" See *Zohar* 1:55b, 182a; 3:74b, 296a (*IZ*).

841. **ויפגע (*Va-yifga*), *He entreated, the place*** The verse is usually understood to mean: *He encountered a certain place*. However the root פגע (*pg'*) means not only "to encounter" but also "to entreat," a sense applied to the verse already in the Midrash. See *Mekhilta, Beshallaḥ* 2; *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9; BT *Berakhot* 26b; *Zohar* 1:148b.

In rabbinic literature, המקום (*ha-maqom*), "the place," is a name of God, emphasizing divine immanence and omnipresence. Here it designates *Shekhinah*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9; Urbach, *The Sages*, 1:66–79.

842. **answered only in a dream** Jacob's unmarried status left him incomplete and unfit for direct encounter with the divine. See Genesis 28:12–17; above, page 331.

Cf. BT *Yevamot* 63a: "Rabbi El'azar said, 'Any man without a wife is not a man.'" See *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:2; *Zohar* 1:55b; 3:5a, 7b, 34a.

843. **Now that he was married…supernal…angels entreated him…** Now that Jacob was married, he was complete. He didn't need to entreat the divine; angels *entreated him*. See above, pages 331–38.

This verse is usually understood to mean *They encountered him*. See above, note 841.

844. **Because by virtue of Jacob and those tribes, they are watered…** Now that Jacob is married and father of so many tribes, he attains the rung of *Tif'eret*, poised to unite with *Shekhinah* and convey to Her the flow of emanation, while the tribes below adorn Her. The angels depend for their sustenance upon the flow proceeding from the vast sea of *Shekhinah*, so they come to entreat Jacob.

845. **eyes wide open…as is written: *When he saw them…*** The expression *he saw them* implies that Jacob was open-eyed.

846. **the same ones he had seen in the dream** Ascending and descending the ladder to heaven. See Genesis 28:12.

847. **So he called them מחנים (*Maḥanayim*), *Double Camps…*** See Genesis 32:3: *When he saw them, Jacob said, "This is a camp of God!" So he named that place* מחנים (*Maḥanayim*), *Double Camps*. According to Rabbi Abba, the name refers to the camps of angels he saw above in his dream and the camps he sees now with open eyes on earth.

848. **Because *Shekhinah* approached him to possess the house…** Once Benjamin is born, completing the full complement of twelve tribes, *Shekhinah* arrives, escorted by angels, to replace Rachel as Jacob's spouse and "essence of the house." She and Jacob will then reside in peace fittingly in the Holy Land. See above, pages 379–83, 397–98.